Searching for Linguistic Evidence of Biblical Monotheism from Adam to Abraham

Colin D. DeVault

Evangelical Theological Seminary
Th.D. Dissertation
Spring 2021

SEARCHING FOR LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE OF BIBLICAL MONOTHEISM
FROM ADAM TO ABRAHAM

APPROVED:

H. Douglas Buckwalter, Ph.D. – Chairperson

Sarah Dorsey Bollinger, Ph.D. – Reader

William Ury, Ph.D. – Reader

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Acknowledgements

It is not until one attempts a project of this magnitude that the weight of the subject matter and the sheer volume of the number of hours required becomes apparent. Three years ago, as I entered the Doctor of Theology program at Evangelical Theological Seminary in Myerstown, Pennsylvania, I could not have accomplished what I now present. But the Holy Spirit makes it clear to me that I was not alone throughout this process, and so many thanks are in order.

First, I am indebted to Evangelical Theological Seminary for its investment in my life and ministry. My first experience at the seminary was sitting under the teaching of the late Dr. David A. Dorsey, who not only taught me to read Biblical Hebrew, but taught in a way that demonstrated Christian holiness. My second experience was sitting under the teaching of Dr. H. Douglas Buckwalter, who not only taught me to read New Testament Greek, but whose very presence in and out of the classroom exemplified the grace of the Lord Jesus. Because of these two men, I have often been brought to the Mercy Seat.

Second, I am indebted to my Dissertation Committee, who held me to an academic standard in both research and writing. Their regular engagement with my submitted chapters and in our Zoom conferences were crucial for the successful completion of this project. While holding my feet to the fire, which they did often, they were always encouraging to my spirit.

H. Douglas Buckwalter, PhD
Sarah Dorsey Bollinger, PhD
M. William Ury, PhD

Third, I am grateful for the several individuals who served as unofficial readers, especially Catherine N. Hayes, who was primary among them. From the start, it was my intention to write a scholarly paper that would also serve the laity of the Church. These few individuals have not only encouraged me along the way, but have regularly reminded me to write clearly, explaining theological terms and concepts as I went along. This they did, sometimes overtly, but more often simply as I remembered that they were reading what I was writing.

Finally, I am deeply in love with the people of the Erie Temple Corps of The Salvation Army, who have constantly encouraged me, their shepherd, as I have studied and written. During the past six months, almost daily they have asked how I was progressing, and either celebrated with me or prayed for strength and encouragement when it was needed most. They have proven their love for me many times over.

To the glory of Yahweh, who was and is and is to come,
Eternal and Sovereign in every age and every realm,

Colin D. DeVault

Dissertation Thesis

This dissertation explores the possibility that biblical monotheism was not a late development in post-exilic Israel in response to its neighboring cultures in the ancient Near East (ANE), as some have suggested, nor even an Israelite invention, going back as far as God's revelation of Himself to Moses and the enslaved Hebrew people at Sinai, but that this foundation of faith came as a result of God's revelation of Himself from the very beginning of human history at creation. This possibility further suggests that God established a line of witness to biblical monotheism that stretched from Adam to Abraham in each succeeding generation, that this witness continued through the patriarchal age, and that it was the basis upon which the Hebrew people built their faith as they transitioned into the people and nation of Israel.

The biblical text is not silent in this regard, as some suggest, but gives indicators that biblical monotheism was "the original religion of mankind."[1] But these indicators often go unnoticed because assumptions are made about the biblical text itself and what it is able to reveal to a modern and postmodern world. Therefore, it will be necessary to address the nature and the reliability of the biblical text as a prerequisite for our study.

[1] Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis: The World of the Bible in the Light of History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), 68.

Abbreviations

ABC	Ariel's Bible Commentary
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*
ANE	Ancient Near East
AV	Authorized Version
BDB	*Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
BH	Biblical Hebrew
BHQ	*Biblia Hebraica Quinta*
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
ca.	*circa*, around
CBS	Commentary for Bible Students
CHALOT	*Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*
CTM	*Concordia Theological Monthly*
ed(s).	edition; edited by; editor(s)
e.g.	*exempli gratia*, for example
ER	*Encyclopedia of Religion* (Mircea Eliade)
esp.	especially
ESV	English Standard Version
HALOT	*Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*
HB	Hebrew Bible
HECOT	*Hebrew-English Concordance to the Old Testament*
ICC	International Critical Commentary

idem.	*idem*, same
Interpretation	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NDSB	New Daily Study Bible
NET	New English Translation
NIBC	New International Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDNTTE	*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology & Exegesis*
NIDNTT	*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*
NIDOTTE	*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
p(p).	page(s)
PC	Pulpit Commentary
rev.	revised
TGELNT	*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*

trans.	translated
UBS	United Bible Society
v(v).	verse(s)
vol(s).	volume(s)
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

Chapter One – An Introduction to What Matters

I. Introduction

Growing up in The Salvation Army gave me a predisposition to believe the Bible to be the revealed and authoritative Word of God. While I could not have voiced it as a child, I now know that our English Methodist roots gave us the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, with its appeal to tradition, reason, and experience as "complementary sources of religious authority."[2] But for Wesley and for Salvationists, Scripture is always the primary source. What the Bible says can be trusted.[3]

That foundation makes several primary assumptions. First, that God in fact revealed Himself to humanity in a manner that is sufficient for human knowledge of the divine. Second, that He enabled this revelation to be preserved accurately for every generation. Third, that this divine revelation alone has the distinction of being the Word of God for every generation; other books come and go—many of them of significance for any number of reasons—but the Bible alone stands apart as God's Word. John Walton, an evangelical scholar, suggests that "we believe the nature of the Bible to be very different from anything else that was available in the ancient world. The very fact that we accept the Old Testament as God's revelation of himself distinguishes it from the literature of Mesopotamia or Egypt."[4] And that distinction was not only true in the ancient world but has been evident in some fashion in every generation.

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[2] Don Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason & Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2005), 1.

[3] With only minor editing, this first paragraph was taken from Colin D. DeVault, "A Call to Critical Faith" (ThD Written Comprehensive Examination, Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2020), 1.

[4] John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 10.

But I would further suggest that God used that revelation, both in an earlier oral form and in its later written form, to reveal that He is the Creator of the cosmos, that His power in the universe is unmatched by any other, that He alone sets the moral standard by which all human subjects are judged, and that He demands exclusivity in both allegiance and worship. Walton is right when he suggests that "for the Israelites, Genesis 1 offered explanations of their view of origins and operations…It represents what the Israelites truly believed about how the world got to be how it is and how it works, though it is not presented as their own ideas, but as revelation from God."[5] This revelation, however, goes beyond God as Creator. It shows how He governs and interacts with that which He created.

Yet amid such clarity about the Bible, it is also clear that this is not a universal perspective. There are many, as there were in the 1960s and 70s, who approach the Bible with caution, and some with outright disdain and contempt. They question both the reliability of its content and its authority over the human condition. Even among evangelicals, many struggle with biblical authority and find the arguments against such authority to be both compelling and insurmountable. The result is a divide in the road, with some holding tenaciously to the doctrine of a Word of God that is both revealed and authoritative, while others forge an alternate way that settles more easily on modern and postmodern ears. By its very definition, however, that divided road sends us into often-opposing camps and defined ideologies. We become entrenched in theological perspectives that leave little room for scholarly debate, and no room for compromise. We sling labels and make judgments.

[5] Walton, *Lost World of Genesis One*, 13.

But in the larger theological landscape—one which encompasses both ends of the spectrum, including the world of the OT patriarchs and their primeval forebears,[6] as well as the NT apostles in the primitive age of the church and moving forward, spanning every generation and culture and language into which the gospel has been transplanted—there is a need for the Church to anchor itself tenaciously to that original mooring which was my theological heritage in The Salvation Army. Despite the direction of biblical scholarship in the last few centuries, and more particularly in the last fifty years, that call is being sounded again in the 21st century.

II. Brief Survey of Biblical Scholarship on Biblical Authority

Historically the Bible has had an authority unequaled among literary works from any age and genre, standing in a class of its own. In his book *The Journey from Texts to Translations*, Paul Wegner asserts that "in spite of its age the Bible remains the most popular and widely read book in the world with more than one hundred million new copies, in whole or in part, produced every year."[7] Bruce Metzger suggests that "it is common knowledge that the Bible has been translated into more languages than any other piece of literature."[8]

For the Jew, the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures, once established, was inviolate, and held authority as the Word of God. Roger Beckwith, the former Warden of Latimer House, Oxford, notes that "on three great occasions in Israel's history, we see a smaller or greater part of the

[6] The term primeval refers to the primitive age, the biblical record of which is recorded in Gen. 1-11, followed by the patriarchal age beginning with God's call to Abram in Gen. 12.

[7] Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origins and Development of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 21.

[8] Bruce M. Metzger, *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 8.

Pentateuch being recognized as having divine authority, and being accepted as a written rule of life for the nation," namely, at Sinai, during the reformation at the hands of Josiah, and in the post-exilic "re-establishment of the nation."[9] Beckwith also suggests that "there are many other references in the OT to the written law of Moses as a God-given rule (Josh. 1:7-8; 8:31; 23:6-8; 1 Kgs. 2:3; 2 Kgs. 14:6; 17:37; and Hos. 8:12, *etc.*) and also to the written form of oracles uttered by the prophets (Is. 30:8; Jer. 25:13; 29:1; 30:2; 36:1-32, *etc.*)."[10]

For the Christian, the canon of Old and New Testaments, once established, held authority as the Word of God—an authority which for many centuries remained unchallenged. Going beyond the Bible's popularity or its sheer volume in annual production, Kevin Vanhoozer suggests that "the reading of Scripture is similar to the reading of books in general but is ultimately marked by an even greater dissimilarity due to its character as the Word of God. Stated differently: what makes the Bible *like* other books is the fact that it has authors; what makes the Bible *unlike* other books is that its primary author is God."[11]

Eckhard Schnabel suggests that in both Jewish and early Christian contexts, "what Scripture says, God says," and that although Jew and Christian would interpret the text differently, "the divine origin and the normative nature of Scripture were acknowledged by both groups."[12]

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[9] Roger T. Beckwith, "The Canon of Scripture," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 28-29.

[10] Beckwith, "Canon of Scripture," 29.

[11] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and The Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 4.

[12] Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Scripture," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 34.

Schnabel concludes his introductory comments by noting that "the conviction that Scripture is the word of God was the undisputed tradition of the church until the 17th century."[13]

A. The Protestant Reformation

What was it about the 17th century that changed that undisputed conviction? It is easy to point to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment that changed the way western civilization thought about itself and its world. There were events in the world of the 17th century that would change the political and religious landscape, and bring into question every authority, whether that of governments, ecclesiastical strongholds, or the Bible. But one cannot consider those events without first looking at the vacuum that was left in the wake of the Reformation in the 16th century.

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed a document to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, hoping to engage the university community in a dialogue about the Church's practice of selling indulgences.[14] In *Historical Theology*, Gregg Allison summarizes the issues in the following paragraph, which deserves a full recitation:

> The selling of indulgences became a highly successful money-making operation for the Catholic Church. "A penny in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs" was the publicity jingle employed by John Tetzel to stimulate the faithful to buy indulgences for those in purgatory. Such crass promotional techniques, feeding off the ignorance of church members, induced many to give beyond their financial

[13] Schnabel, "Scripture," 34.

[14] For a fuller understanding of indulgences, Gregg Allison points back to Thomas Aquinas, a thirteenth century Doctor of the Church, who wrote, "The reason why [indulgences] help is the oneness of the mystical body in which many have performed works of satisfaction exceeding the requirements of their debts…. So great is the quantity of such merits that it exceeds the entire debt of punishment due to those who are living at the moment: and this is especially due to the merits of Christ." But Allison himself continues, "These merits accumulate in a 'treasury of the saints' and can be allocated to those who need them. The pope has the authority to distribute these merits on behalf of the souls in purgatory, thereby releasing them from their temporal punishment" (Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 507).

> means. Still, the foreboding sense of divine judgment and punishment after death was strong among the common people, and they recognized the need to make satisfaction to God. They chased after justification, but the church offered the faithful little more than empty promises that the pope could draw upon the treasury of the saints to relieve them and those in purgatory of the temporal punishment due to sin… Into this dismal situation, a young monk by the name of Martin Luther dares to enter."[15]

For Luther, besides being incensed that Pope Leo X would send Tetzel to extract funds from the German people to build St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, Luther felt the Church was moving further and further from its biblical roots. According to Allison, with the practice of indulgences, "justification was not confined to this life but could be completed after death."[16] Dialogue and reform were badly needed, but would never come. Instead, Luther would eventually be excommunicated from the Church. The reforms he had wanted would now become a full break with the Church at Rome, which was not only costly for Luther, but for Rome in terms of being able to control governments outside of Rome itself.

As the sub-title of their book suggests, Felipe Fernández-Armesto and Derek Wilson suggest that their perspective is radical, but their depiction paints an accurate picture of the world of the 16th century—a world that was ready for serious change. They suggest that "throughout Latin Christendom the medieval Church claimed a monopoly on truth. Not just religious truth. In a world in which the material was shot through with the spiritual, issues of politics, personal morality, legal obligation, business dealings, marital relationships, war and peace were all susceptible to ecclesiastical direction."[17]

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[15] Allison, *Historical Theology*, 508-9.

[16] Allison, *Historical Theology*, 507.

[17] Felipe Fernández-Armesto and Derek Wilson, *Reformations: A Radical Interpretation of Christianity and the World (1500-2000)* (New York: Scribner, 1996), 25.

Fernández-Armesto and Wilson conclude that "there was no nation in 16th century Europe in which either Church or State was not involved in the shaping of public opinion."[18] But with the Reformation and the Church's loss of authority, the Church became less influential in world affairs, no longer able to control every national thought and movement.

B. The European Enlightenment

Following quickly on the heels of the Protestant Reformation was the Renaissance and the ensuing European Enlightenment, with the birth of the Modern Age. Jonathan Israel describes his perspectives on the more radical side of the European Enlightenment, suggesting that it was far from peripheral or marginal, as some have suggested, and that Spinoza and Spinozism were "the intellectual backbone of the European Radical Enlightenment everywhere."[19]

As the Renaissance opened into the early Modern Period of the mid-16th century, Copernicus published *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* in 1543, asserting that the earth was not the center of the cosmos, but the sun. This claim set off a vast array of developments across all aspects of the sciences, including mathematics, physics, astronomy, biology, and chemistry, and became what we now know as the Scientific Revolution. With this revolution, humanity began to question every aspect of what was known, including human well-being and human government.

There was also dynamic movement in the world's religious life, with the Reformation only a few decades behind us, and Protestantism on the rise throughout Europe and the Americas.

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[18] Fernández-Armesto and Wilson, *Reformations*, 27.

[19] Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (London: Oxford University Press, 2001), v-vii.

Political upheaval was also making inroads in the human experience, with the papacy no longer able to control nations and governments. The 30 Years War began as a religious civil war between the Protestants and Roman Catholics in Germany but had great political fallout as leaders vied for the balance of power throughout Europe, causing not only massive human grief, but political instability.

In the final years of the 16th century, two men were born who would vastly influence the Renaissance and the early Modern Period: English philosopher Thomas Hobbes in 1588 and French philosopher René Descartes in 1596. Hobbes proposed his social contract theory, questioning the legitimacy of the state over individual persons. Descartes, whose great interest was in metaphysics and epistemology, proposed a metaphysical dualism that saw the body and the soul as separate entities.

As Hobbes was writing about politics and human government, and Descartes was writing about Cartesian Dualism and its effects on epistemology and faith, the mid-17th century saw the birth of two men in England whose philosophy would help the world begin to understand the volatility of their times: John Locke in 1632 and Isaac Newton in 1643. Locke picked up Hobbes' social contract theory, believing that there were laws in nature that rose above the political authority of governments, which would influence later generations to propose that the "needs of the people" were "the sole source of political legitimacy."[20]

Newton's primary contributions to the Scientific Revolution and the Modern Period were in the field of physics, where he would propose three laws of motion: inertia, velocity, and

[20] Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 583.

momentum. It is significant to note, however, that in his study of nature and its laws, Newton saw order and beauty in nature as coming from God.[21]

Although every aspect of human life and civilization was in transition, with the nature of human knowledge being questioned at almost every turn, the existence of God seemed not to be an issue generally. Israel suggests that "during the later Middle Ages and the early modern age down to around 1650, western civilization was based on a largely shared core of faith, tradition, and authority,"[22] and notes that both Newton and Locke were among those who "sought to substantiate and defend the truth of revealed religion and the principle of a divinely created and ordered universe."[23]

Into this volatile setting was born Dutch philosopher Benedict de Spinoza in 1632. Of Portuguese Sephardi stock, Spinoza struggled with Cartesian Dualism, suggesting instead that Substance is infinitely unified and ordered. This "central controlling idea"[24] and the various doctrines that would come from it would lead Spinoza away from the moderate mainstream of the Enlightenment and into avowed atheism and the Radical Enlightenment. Israel says of this radical move,

> The Radical Enlightenment, whether on an atheistic or deistic basis, rejected all compromise with the past and sought to sweep away existing structures entirely, rejecting the Creation as traditionally understood in Judaeo-Christian civilization, and the intervention of a providential God in human affairs, denying the possibility of miracles, and reward and punishment in an afterlife, scorning all forms of

[21] See Steven E. Jones, "A Brief Survey of Sir Isaac Newton's Views on Religion" in *Converging Paths to Truth*, ed. Michael D. Rhodes and J. Ward Moody (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2011).

[22] Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 3.

[23] Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 15.

[24] Baruch Spinoza, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, ed. Joseph Ratner and Shawn Conners (El Paso, TX: El Paso Norte Press, 2010), 14.

> ecclesiastical authority, and refusing to accept that there is any God-ordained social hierarchy, concentration of privilege or land-ownership in noble hands, or religious sanction for monarchy.[25]

It is obvious that Spinoza is dealing with epistemology—that is, the theory of knowledge. But his open rejection of the Bible and its authority opened the door for others, who were less radical in their approach, to nonetheless travel down that same road and the paths that proceed from it. Richard Averbeck, professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and contributor to *Reading Genesis 1-2: An Evangelical Conversation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013), notes that Julius Wellhausen referred to Spinoza "as one of the founders of the historical-critical method to which he [Wellhausen] was heir,"[26] and suggests that "Spinoza set a trend in biblical studies that endures to the present day in various forms."[27]

Eta Linnemann, a German Protestant theologian and student of Rudolf Bultmann, suggests that the Enlightenment did not "consciously…break from the Christian faith," but only against church teaching. "Thus, we may speak of persons being un-Christian," she says, "without being consciously anti-Christian."[28] Yet she suggests that the "culture and science" of the Enlightenment "were anti-Christian from the start," and that we bowed down, having "allowed ourselves to be convinced that thinking and creativity are possible only within this framework."[29]

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[25] Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 11-12.

[26] Richard E. Averbeck, "Pentateuchal Criticism and the Priestly Torah," in *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith?: A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture*, ed. James K. Hoffmeier and Dennis R. Magary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 152.

[27] Averbeck, "Pentateuchal Criticism," 153.

[28] Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology? Reflections of a Bultmannian Turned Evangelical*, trans. Robert Yarbrough (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 38.

[29] Linnemann, *Historical Criticism*, 36.

C. The Critical Approach to Biblical Studies

The next few centuries would see a number of developments, both in the world at large and in the world of biblical studies—developments that would shape, among other things, how we view and interact with the Bible. In the wake of empirical scientific discovery and its application to every aspect of human rationality, there was a growing awareness that these same scientific principles of experimentation and discovery could be applied to biblical studies in the same way they were being applied to other ancient texts, resulting in a more accurate reading of the OT. The scientific approach, it was thought, could set aside the subjectivism of religion and ecclesiastical dogmas and get to the heart of the biblical author's intended meaning—a meaning that had too long been encumbered with religious overtones. Thus the world of biblical studies entered a new critical phase of scholarship,[30] which began with a critical look at the Pentateuch.

Averbeck lays out a "broad strokes" outline of the development of Pentateuchal Criticism in the 20th century, dividing the century into thirds. In the first third, building on the influence of the late nineteenth century, Averbeck suggests the diachronic disciplines of source, form, tradition, and redaction criticism, each focused on "a kind of archeology of the text," out of which comes "the historical-critical method and its 'scholarly consensus'."[31] In the middle part of the 20th century came the biblical archaeology movement with a heavy emphasis on ANE comparisons, both cultural and religious. Then in the final third of the century came synchronic approaches to the text, including rhetorical, canonical, and literary studies. Summarizing this development,

[30] The word *critical* comes etymologically from the Greek word κριτικός (*kritikos*), *to judge or discern*; see Moisés Silva, "κρίνω," *NIDNTTE* 2:744; Martin G. Klingbeil, "Historical Criticism," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003], 401). Averbeck suggests "the term actually refers to 'the art of objective evaluation'" ("Pentateuchal Criticism," 155).

[31] Averbeck, "Pentateuchal Criticism," 151.

Averbeck writes, "The diachronic historical-critical methods tend to fragment the text and explain it in terms of its various stages of composition through time; archaeological and comparative contextual methods attempt to explain it in light of the ancient world from which it comes; and synchronic methods tend toward treating it as a unified literary or theological composition or both."[32]

As scholars approached the text from this new vantage point of empirical study, they encountered issues that persuaded them to no longer see the Pentateuch as the work of a single author. Bruce Waltke suggests that while "Moses would have used sources" for his writing of the Pentateuch, literary source critics eliminate the majority of Mosaic input "citing the presence of divine names…and other vocabulary in combination with changes in style, doublet accounts of the same event, and differences in theology."[33]

A number of proposals were put forward to deal with these issues, but it was that which bore the names of Karl Heinrich Graf and Julius Wellhausen that became the established position of biblical scholars for most of the 20th century. The Graf-Wellhausen Documentary Hypothesis separated the textual material into four separate sources for the composition of the Pentateuch: the Yahwist (J) because of the use of Yahweh/Jehovah for the divine referent, and dated by scholars around 850 BC; the Elohist (E) because of the use of Elohim for the divine referent, and dated around 750 BC; the Deuteronomist (D), which came about during Josiah's reform, and dated at 621 BC; and the Priestly (P), which was interested in cultic matters, and dated in the fifth century

[32] Averbeck, "Pentateuchal Criticism," 152.

[33] Bruce K. Waltke, with Cathi J. Fredericks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 24.

BC.[34] Waltke himself suggests earlier dates,[35] although not sufficiently early to allow Mosaic input. He further notes that "critics originally dated these sources by the assumption of a simplistic evolution of religion and by putting strictures upon the prophetic gifts so that the patriarchs' alleged prophecies were in fact composed at the time of their fulfillment."[36]

A number of issues arise from the historical critical approach that have impacted the authority of the biblical text, the first of which is the displacement of the Church as the primary interpreter of Scripture. Alister McGrath, professor of historical theology at Oxford University, sounds an alarm when he writes, "the study of Scripture has become exiled from its homeland," calling this "the Babylonian Captivity of Scripture."[37] According to the critical scholars, only those who had specialized in the critical arts were equipped to determine the author's—or in this case, the editor's or redactor's—intended meaning. The Church was no longer interpreter of its sacred text.

Probably the most helpful resource on this matter of displacement is the little volume, *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church*, edited by Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson. Compiled from a series of addresses given at a 1994 conference under the same theme, which was jointly sponsored by the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology and the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, Braaten and Jenson bring together competent scholarship from a variety of theological

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[34] David W. Baker, "Source Criticism," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 801-02.

[35] Waltke, *Genesis*, 24.

[36] Waltke, *Genesis*, 24-25.

[37] Alister E. McGrath, "Reclaiming Our Roots and Vision: Scripture and the Stability of the Christian Church," in *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 69.

backgrounds to speak to the crisis that presently faces the Church. Together, the essayists address the question, "Does the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation *suffice of itself apart from the gospel and the church* as the community in which the Bible functions as canon and through which the living voice of God is heard?"[38]

Thomas Hopko argues that there is a necessary relationship between the church and the Bible, and that "God did not give the world a book or a collection of writings. God rather called a community of people to which he is unconditionally devoted and in which he continually acts through his divine Word and Spirit."[39] He also strongly suggests that to remove the Bible from the community of faith is both "uncritical" and "unscientific" since it was born in and for that context, and that in any other context "there is little hope for the Bible to be anything other than a collection of writings that anyone can interpret, by whatever methods, for whatever reasons, to whatever ends."[40]

Finally Roy Harrisville suggests that the loss of biblical authority is not merely an external loss, where once citing the Bible "settled matters," but more seriously, an internal loss, where the Bible serves as "sole and final rule for faith and life" for the believer. "The loss of *this* authority is far worse," Harrisville writes, "more tragic than simply the loss of any external authority. We

[38] Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, "Introduction: Gospel, Church, and Scripture," in *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), x; italics added.

[39] Thomas Hopko, "The Church, the Bible, and Dogmatic Theology," in *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 108.

[40] Hopko, "Church," 116.

had best be clear about it: The Bible is lost to the church in terms of its power to evoke the resolve to live or die by it."[41]

This displacement of the Church as the primary interpreter of Scripture, however, is only one side of a larger issue. The concern is not simply that the Church has been removed from this important process, but that the Academy has become possessor and primary interpreter of the text. While that sounds harmless, especially when we consider that the intent of this new critical approach to the text was to give us a more accurate reading of the Scripture and remove the subjectivism of the Church's encumbered and dogmatic approach, it has become clear that the Academy comes to the text with an agenda of its own. McGrath writes:

> I have deliberately borrowed Luther's 1520 image of the "Babylonian captivity of the church" to make the point that the study of Scripture has become exiled from its homeland. Formerly undertaken within the community of faith, it has been banished to a community with its own definite—although often unacknowledged and unstated—sets of beliefs and values. As a result, it is held in bondage. It is not free to challenge those beliefs, but is judged in their light.[42]

The impact of the Academy now being the possessor and primary interpreter of the text is evident in several key areas of critical research in regard to the OT. First, the OT is studied in the context of the ANE and the text made to stand alongside the texts of Israel's neighbors.

Nahum Sarna, professor of biblical studies and chair of the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University in the mid-20th century, does not see this placement of the text in an ANE context as a concern and is not against the critical study of the text of the Bible,

[41] Roy A. Harrisville, "The Loss of Biblical Authority and Its Recovery," in *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 48; italics original.

[42] McGrath, "Reclaiming," 69.

suggesting that "far from presenting a threat to faith, a challenge to the intellect may reinforce faith and purify it."[43] His approach is too complex to be dismantled and paraphrased:

> As a matter of fact, seldom have the times been more propitious for a revival of sympathetic interest and even involvement in the biblical word. The wealth of epigraphic material that has been unearthed in the Near East in recent years has revolutionized the scholarly approach to biblical studies. The Semitic lexicon has been greatly enlarged, completely new features of Hebrew grammar and syntax have been uncovered and, *most important of all, biblical literature has been placed in its appropriate cultural setting*. The net result has been an elucidation of the written word to an extent never hitherto possible. This, together with the manuscripts found in the Dead Sea area and at Masada, has led in turn to a more positive re-evaluation of the general integrity and antiquity of our received Hebrew text. Furthermore, some sensational archaeological finds, coupled with new techniques of critical analysis, have abundantly demonstrated that the Pentateuchal narratives cannot be dismissed, as they were not so long ago, as late folkloristic legends, but must be treated with the utmost respect as historical documents.[44]

But not every assessment of the placement of the OT side by side with other ancient texts is as hopeful as Sarna's. Linnemann suggests that when theology is approached merely as a science, the Scripture loses its distinctiveness, and therefore its authority:

> The concept *Holy Scripture* is relativized so that the Bible is nothing more than a religious writing like all other religious writings. Since other religions have their holy scriptures, one cannot assume that the Bible is somehow unique and superior to them. This is why it gets treated like any other book. There comes to be no distinction between how the Bible is regarded and how the *Odyssey* is read, even though it is clear enough upon careful study that there are differences between them.
>
> To be fair, some think that they serve the proclamation of the gospel when they establish such differences. But they overlook the fact that in the process of making the comparison they reduce God's Word to a collection of religious ideas and theological concepts. This renders the living Word a dead letter, as becomes abundantly clear in many pulpits as pastors strive in vain to bring life to now lifeless texts, resorting finally to psychology, sociology, socialism, and other "isms" in an attempt to infuse texts with new vitality.[45]

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[43] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, xxiii.

[44] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, xxiii; italics added.

[45] Linnemann, *Historical Criticism*, 84-85.

Therefore, the problem is not so much that historical-critical scholarship looks at the OT with the same tools they use in analyzing other ancient texts, but that they see the two—the OT and whatever other ancient text they are holding in their hands—as comparable, as equal. In this way, the OT is always diminished.

The second area to be impacted in the Academy being the possessor and primary interpreter of the text is that of the dating of the OT text. In the process of analyzing the text of the OT by historical-critical methods, the text and the sources suggested for its manufacture are arbitrarily set so as to corroborate established theories. As we see in the dating of the sources for the Pentateuch, for instance, none of the proposed dates is early enough for Mosaic authorship to have been possible,[46] and Moses' involvement is summarily ruled out. Now for the purposes of this study, Mosaic authorship would be a secondary issue, except that the biblical text itself, *outside* of the Pentateuch, attributes at least a portion of its content to Mosaic authorship—if not the majority. Baker notes that Wellhausen's Hypothesis "would have no place for Mosaic involvement in any of the material at any stage. This would imply that statements to the effect that Moses wrote at least some of the material…arose either through ignorance or distortion."[47] Are we content to assign ignorance or distortion to other biblical writers, or to Jesus Himself?

Another example of the problem with the dating of the text is given by Linnemann, who writes at length concerning how critical scholars determined that the priestly source (P) was dated to the period during and immediately following the exile in the 6th century BC. Citing Samuel

[46] This is true even if one uses the earlier dates that Waltke has given; Waltke, *Genesis*, 24.

[47] Baker, "Source Criticism," 802.

Külling,[48] Linnemann indicates that Eduard Reuss says that the late-dating of the priestly source was "the product of intuition," which he passes on to his students in the easily-remembered statement, "The prophets are earlier than the law, and the Psalms more recent than both." Linnemann says that "before there was even an attempt to furnish proof, a student of Reuss named K. H. Graf…internalizes this formula, which from then on determines his view of the history of Israel." Graf is warned by Reuss "of the magnitude of this 'finding'," and Graf places the idea "on the back burner."[49] But the idea can be detected in all of his writings from that point on.

Linnemann suggests that "although there had not even been an attempt at furnishing scientific proof," Graf writes to his teacher that he is "totally convinced" of the post-exilic dating of much of the Pentateuch. Several attempts are made questioning his position, but to no avail. Ultimately, according to Linnemann, despite there being no proof, the theory came to rest in Wellhausen's 1878 *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*.[50]

But the concern does not stop at the early and arbitrary date of the sources for the text. The third area to be impacted in the Academy being the possessor and primary interpreter of the text is that of the re-writing of Israel's history on the basis of the proposed dating of the text. The scholar must ask if there are similar accounts for determining the dating of the remaining sources? While that is not clear, nor pertinent for our study, what *is* evident in the bigger picture is that this late dating of the text has conditioned the Academy's view of Israel's historiography, calling into question key assertions and events, including the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

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[48] Samuel R. Külling, *Zur Datierung der 'Genesis-P-Stücke'* (2d ed., Riehen, 1985); Linnemann translates the title as: *On the Dating of the 'P' Source in Genesis*.

[49] Linnemann, *Historical Criticism*, 130-31.

[50] Linnemann, *Historical Criticism*, 131-32.

In his *Elements of Old Testament Theology*, Claus Westermann declares boldly that "what the Old Testament says about reality, it says about God; what it says about God, it says about reality." *That*, he suggests, is the "fundamental difference" between OT narrative and "the concept of history used in historical science." Westermann sees the ability to document events as the determining factor for historical science, "proving something from historical documents." But he sees this as a limitation of that science. "This limitation," he suggests, "shows itself above all in the investigation into early human history…It is concerned with primitive peoples and in general is not able to work with historical sources or historical documents. Since it does work with peoples, tribes, and other groups in a prehistorical stage, it must reckon with conditions not corresponding to the criteria of historical science."[51] Westermann gives two examples of this limitation. The first is narrative, which he suggests "precedes historical writing. This narrative, however, portrays an event differently than does historical writing. It does tell of something which really happened, but not in a way enabling it to be ascertained as 'historical'."[52] Westermann concludes that "the word of God does not exist for modern historical understanding because it cannot be historically documented."[53]

Gerhard von Rad also addresses this matter of historical interpretation. In *Methodological Presuppositions*, a sub-section of his *OT Theology*, he suggests that "the Old Testament writings confine themselves to representing Jahweh's[54] relationship to Israel and the world in one aspect

[51] Claus Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology*, trans. Douglas W. Scott (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 13.

[52] Westermann, *Elements of OT Theology*, 13.

[53] Westermann, *Elements of OT Theology*, 16.

[54] Because von Rad is writing originally in German, Yahweh is written as Jahweh (with the German J being pronounced as an English Y).

only, namely as a continuing divine activity in history. This implies that in principle Israel's faith is grounded in a theology of history. It regards itself as based upon historical acts, and as shaped and re-shaped by factors in which it saw the hand of Jahweh at work."[55] After suggesting that there is a difference in approach between Israel's perspective and that of "modern critical historical scholarship," von Rad suggests that since the end of the 18th century, "critical historical scholarship has constructed an impressively complete picture of the history of the people of Israel" to replace the picture which the Church had developed from its study of the OT. "Upon this process there is no going back," he suggests, "nor has it yet indeed come to an end."[56]

Despite the fact that in 1962 von Rad had already begun to see the erosion of the traditional picture of Israel's history, he calls for a reconciliation of these two pictures,[57] and suggests that "The kerygmatic picture too (and this even at the points where it diverges so widely from our historical picture) is founded in the actual history and has not been invented." [58]

These second and third areas that are impacted in the Academy being the possessor and primary interpreter of the text are closely related: the dating of the OT through the dates of the sources, and the re-writing of biblical history based on those arbitrary dates. But there is one final area that is impacted: the biblical text has lost its voice. Does the Bible not have a word for this and every generation? Have we made such progress in our rationality that only culture itself is allowed to speak to cultural issues?

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[55] Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*; Volume 1, *The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 106

[56] Von Rad, *OT Theology*, 1:106.

[57] Von Rad, *OT Theology*, 1:107.

[58] Von Rad, *OT Theology*, 1:108.

McGrath notes that in our attempt to make the gospel relevant to our changing culture, we are assuming that our modern world has a single culture that can be defined and addressed. He insists that "the church simply cannot afford to allow its identity and proclamation to be dictated by such short-term cultural trends, restricted to specific sections of society. Reclaiming the Bible is about reclaiming our history, our story, our memories, and our message, in the firm knowledge that we have something to say which the world needs to hear, and are not simply echoing its own voice."[59]

In his monograph titled *Homiletics*, Karl Barth suggests that "preachers are summoned to a life history with the Bible in which something constantly takes place between them and God's Word…The fact of the canon tells simply that the church has regarded these scriptures as the place where we can expect to hear the voice of God. The proper attitude of preachers does not depend on whether they hold on to a doctrine of inspiration but on whether or not they expect God to speak to them here. This is an active expectation. It is an ongoing submission, a seeking…"[60]

Elizabeth Achtemeier, an American Presbyterian minister and visiting professor of OT at Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and Duke Divinity School, agrees with Barth, and further suggests that "our task is to reawaken the church to that divine voice by which it is addressed, to reclaim for the church the canon of the Scriptures through which God in his mercy reveals himself."[61] When asking how the church might go about this reawakening,

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[59] McGrath, "Reclaiming," 86-87.

[60] Karl Barth, *Homiletics*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Donald E. Daniels (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 78-79.

[61] Elizabeth Achtemeier, "The Canon as the Voice of the Living God," in *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 122.

Achtemeier suggests that we "let the Scriptures prove themselves by always presenting them. No one believes that God speaks through his Word until they hear it. And no argument can convince the unbeliever apart from the work of the Spirit."[62]

Stepping back, then, to view the historical-critical method as a whole we turn to Waltke, who suggests in connection with Genesis that while literary source critics "won a broad consensus for about a century (1880-1980)…new data and approaches…have recently seriously disrupted this consensus,"[63] noting that the tools they use "to trace the history of a given text or source from its earliest oral stage through to its commitment to writing and finally to its redaction into the present text of Genesis have proved woefully inadequate."[64]

Von Rad has stated that "there is no going back" in this process. Yet he is concerned that this road has led to the loss of reading the NT Christ-event into an OT theology.[65] He further concludes that while it was necessary to free OT theology from dogmatics, the discipline is both impoverished and handicapped in the process,

> In spite of all dogmatic prejudices, how rich and varied nevertheless were the relationship of the theology of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the Old Testament! At that time theology still had a vital interest in the details of the Mosaic cult, in the anthropology of the Old Testament, and in the elucidation of intricate questions of archaeology. With the rise of rationalism and the assertion of the autonomy of Biblical theology, the properly theological connexions with the Old

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[62] Achtemeier, "Canon," 122.

[63] Waltke, *Genesis*, 24-25.

[64] Waltke, *Genesis*, 26.

[65] Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology;* Volume 2, *The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 388. Von Rad suggests that "it is becoming apparent that there can properly be no such thing as a theology of the Old Testament which confines itself to the Old Testament only; unless, of course, it disregards the most essential characteristic of the Old Testament, the way in which it points forward to the Christ-event of the New" (Von Rad, *OT Theology*, 2:388-89).

> Testament all at once became much more unilinear and abstract—in a word, poorer.[66]

Critique of the Documentary Hypothesis has not only come from conservative Christian scholars, but also from the heart of Jewish scholarship. Kaufmann, in his introduction to *The Religion of Israel*, suggests that Wellhausen's theory laid a solid foundation for biblical criticism, but that many of the arguments are now called into question, even rejected; yet biblical scholarship "continues to adhere to the conclusions."[67]

This present study is not suggesting that the historical-critical approach to the OT be summarily dismissed, nor that its honest gains—those which have come through thoughtful investigation and serious debate—be thrown out altogether. But in searching for new foundations, it is important that there is a collaboration that encompasses both Academy *and* Church, that the OT may once again be given a voice to speak to a world in great need.

This brief survey of scholarship on biblical authority, although more extensive than perhaps seems necessary, lays an important foundation for our study of biblical monotheism. Without such a footing, any study that counters what has already been determined by the Academy is easily dismissed. If the biblical text cannot be shown to be authoritative and divinely revealed, and therefore cannot be trusted, then any conclusions drawn from that text are immediately suspect. However, having laid that foundation, we move to a brief survey of scholarship on biblical monotheism itself.

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[66] Von Rad, *OT Theology*, 1:112-13.

[67] Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trs. and abridged by Moshe Greenberg (Jerusalem: Sefer ve Sefel Publishing, 2003), 1.

III. Brief Survey of Scholarship on Biblical Monotheism[68]

Before we move into a discussion of scholarship on biblical monotheism, several general comments are necessary as preface. First, we must understand the people about whom we speak. In our discussion about Israelite culture and religion, there will be continual reference to Israel, to the patriarchs (that is, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), and to those living in the primeval age from Adam to Abraham. OT historian Martin Noth suggests that, despite questions about how the name 'Israel' was first applied collectively, Israel "is normally described as a *nation* in the Old Testament tradition, and thereby reckoned among the many nations of the ancient Orient."[69] While Noth makes reference to 'primeval Israel,'[70] this study will use the more basic terms, assuming that Israel was not truly formed as a people until the Exodus, and not formed as a nation until they were united under the monarchy, and will make reference accordingly.

Second, by way of preface, we must understand that there seems to be a lack of distinction between the general term *monotheism*, and the descriptive terms *Israelite* monotheism, *biblical* monotheism, and *historical* monotheism; and the occasional mention of *mosaic* and *Sinai* monotheism.[71] For some scholars, these various terms are assumed to be interchangeable. But if

[68] The limitation in this paper, both in terms of space and focus, does not allow a lengthy history of scholarship on the subject of monotheism. There are, however, a number of sources that can be accessed for such a history, see esp. Richard S. Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 71-80.

[69] Martin Noth, *The History of Israel*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 4; italics original.

[70] Noth, *History*, 6.

[71] Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 150.

we are to ensure that we are not simply redefining the term to suit our purposes, we must agree on what we mean.

In an entry in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Theodore Ludwig gives a helpful but lengthy definition:

> The term *monotheism* refers to the religious experience and the philosophical perception that emphasize God as one, perfect, immutable, creator of the world from nothing, distinct from the world, all-powerfully involved in the world, personal, and worthy of being worshiped by all creatures. Some forms of monotheism, however, differ about the notions of God as distinct from the world and as personal…The term *monotheism* presupposes the idea of *theos*…It also presupposes the unity of the divine and raises one *theos* exclusively to absolute supremacy and power, producing and governing everything according to the divine will."[72]

While there are some key thoughts in Ludwig's definition that would seem to serve this study well, we are better served by a simpler, more concise definition. Mark Smith, to whom we will turn momentarily, defines monotheism as "the worship and belief in Yahweh and disbelief in the reality of other deities."[73] T. J. Meek goes a step further, providing what is likely the clearest and most helpful definition: "exclusive belief in and worship of one god and the denial of even the existence of other gods, which when believed in are merely figments of the imagination, with no reality at all."[74]

In that light, R. J. Zwi Werblowsky defines polytheism simply as the "recognition and worship of many gods," which he suggests "is used mainly in contrast with *monotheism*."[75] There

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[72] Theodore M. Ludwig, "Monotheism," *ER* 10:68-69; italics original.

[73] Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), 1.

[74] As cited in Smith, *Origins*, 150.

[75] R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, "Polytheism," *ER* 11:436, italics original.

are also two other terms that we will encounter minimally in this study, but which are defined by Michiko Yusa. The first is *monolatry*, which is "the exclusive worship of a god by a certain social group," or better understood as territorial, regional, or national gods whose rule was limited to that territory, region, or people group. The second is *henotheism*, which is "a worship of one god after another." Yusa suggests that henotheism arose from a variety of gods in a single situation who each simultaneously ruled different aspects of nature.[76] In this case, the worshiper turns to one god for sustenance and to another for protection.

Third, by way of preface, it has been suggested that the idea of monotheism and polytheism in the ancient world would have been an odd conversation since the ancients would never have thought in those modern terms. If one were to ask an ancient if he were monotheistic or polytheistic, Smith suggests, "the question would make no sense" because these are modern concepts that we are reading back into the religious life of the ancients. For the ancient Israelites, "what mattered was the exclusive claim and relationship of the Israelite people and their deity."[77]

Despite these distinctions, there is a present study taking place across biblical scholarship, albeit incidental for some, into the origin and nature of the Israelite religion. Perhaps the ancients would not have thought in terms of monotheism and polytheism, nor understand such questions about what they believed and how those beliefs affected their daily lives and cultic activity, but in studying faith in early human history those are the terms that best describe the experience that the biblical record suggests.

For this brief survey that follows, we will review the work of Mark Smith, who has written extensively on monotheism in an ANE context; Yehezkel Kaufmann and Nahum Sarna, each

[76] Michiko Yusa, "Henotheism," *ER* 6:266.

[77] Smith, *Origins*, 11.

coming from a Jewish scholarly perspective; four magisterial theologians (Edmond Jacobs, Walther Eichrodt, Gerhard von Rad, and Claus Westermann); and finally John Walton and John Oswalt, each coming to the conversation from an evangelical perspective. While each takes a different position on the subject of monotheism, their combined contributions enable us to make a broad sweep across the landscape.

A. Mark S. Smith

Therefore, we begin with Mark Smith, professor of Old Testament Language and Exegesis at Princeton Theological Seminary, and formerly chair of Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in the Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University. Smith has written a number of relevant monographs, including *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2009); and *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

Smith suggests that the Bible provides "a basic narrative account" of what humans know about "the monotheistic God," but that this narrative does not stand up to "numerous scholarly studies" in the last half of the 20th century. He further notes:

> *According to the story of the Bible, monotheism was not the original condition of the world*. Instead, it stepped onto the world stage with the appearance of Israel. For when Israel's god, Yahweh, was revealed first to the patriarchs and then definitively to Moses and the Israelite people on Mount Sinai, the central moment in world history occurred: the revelation of the one God known by the one name of the Tetragrammaton. Thanks to the biblical picture, the monotheism of ancient Israel has been regarded as a revolution against the religious thought of its neighbors.[78]

[78] Smith, *Origins*, 4; italics added.

Smith, however, further suggests that scholarly studies have shown that, while Israelite monotheism is "the more dominant narrative," the Bible also shows signs of Israelite polytheism.[79] In fact, reacting strongly to the title of William Albright's 1968 book, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, which *contrasts* Israelite monotheism with the polytheism extant in Canaan, [80] Smith sees a more interconnected picture between the two, which is evident in the intentionally-turned subtitle: *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*.

Smith sees major archaeological discoveries in the final decades of the 20th century since Albright published his book that substantially "cast doubt" on the view that the Canaanites and Israelites were culturally distinct. "The material culture of the region exhibits numerous common points between the Israelites and 'Canaanites' in the Iron I period (ca. 1200-1000). The record would suggest that the Israelite culture largely overlapped with, and derived from, 'Canaanite' culture," and that in Iron Age I we "cannot maintain a radical cultural separation" between the two.[81] But some of Smith's conclusions are not borne out in the biblical text.

The first point of contention is not that Israel and the Canaanites share a common cultural heritage. That is quite clear from the biblical record. But the contention is in the jump that Smith makes from "numerous common points" between the two, to the one having "derived from" the other, a conclusion that the facts do no warrant. The biblical record makes it clear that the Canaanites derived from Noah's son Ham, while Israel traces its heritage back to Shem. The two

[79] Smith, *Origins*, 4-5.

[80] William F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: An Historical Analysis of Two Conflicting Faiths* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968).

[81] Smith, *Early History*, 6-7.

people groups are not derived from one another, although they have a common Noahtic heritage, but that is true of all humanity after the flood (Gen. 9:18-19).

Smith specifically cites inscriptions and material culture as points of continuity when comparing the two cultures.[82] He suggests, "It is evident from many areas of culture that Israelite society drew very heavily from Canaanite culture,"[83] although he concedes that "establishing ethnic continuity or discontinuity is impossible for this [Iron Age I] period," and that "some distinctions probably existed among the various groups inhabiting the highlands and valleys and coastal regions in Israel's earliest history; information about them is largely unavailable at present."[84] But this is true only if one discounts the biblical data as a reliable source.

The second point of contention is that he extends this continuity to Israel's religious experience. "The Canaanite (or, West Semitic) background of Israel's culture extended to the realm of religion. This is evident from the terminology for cultic sacrifices and personnel."[85]

Smith has studied extensively the textual and material evidence from Ugarit, and suggests that "the understanding of Yahweh has been shaped strongly by the study of Canaanite deities."[86] This comes out in Richard Hess's cataloguing of scholarship on Israelite religion. He says that Smith argues that Israel's religion can be characterized by three major tendencies: "There is the convergence of the characteristics of deities such as El, Baal, and Asherah into those of Yahweh. There is the divergence of the figures of Baal and Asherah from Yahweh. Finally, there is the role

[82] Smith, *Early History*, 19, 21, respectively.

[83] Smith, *Early History*, 24.

[84] Smith, *Early History*, 7; brackets added.

[85] Smith, *Early History*, 22.

[86] Smith, *Early History*, 1.

of the monarchy in the acceptance of various deities and images associated with Yahweh as well as the later rejection of these under Josiah."[87] Hess further explains Smith's position, noting, "various characteristics [of Baal] such as those of the storm and storm cloud were adopted and applied to Yahweh. As noted, Asherah was reduced to a cult symbol of Yahweh. However, the female characteristics of Yahweh and some background to personification of Wisdom (e.g., Prov. 3) owe their origins to Asherah. The sun deity was subsumed by Yahweh, who took on its characteristics."[88]

Smith suggests that "poetic texts such as Exodus 15, Deuteronomy 32, and Psalm 82 preserve the belief of this [Iron Age I] period where El was still the chief deity and Yahweh (like Baal in the Ugaritic literature) was a subordinate."[89]

In his introductory thoughts in *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, Smith describes monotheism as "a kind of ancient rhetoric reinforcing Israel's exclusive relationship with its deity… an inner community discourse" designed to "absolutize" that relationship in the midst of a world that had drastically changed. He dates this rhetoric to the 7th and 6th centuries BC, basically suggesting that "in its political and social reduction in the world" [that is, in its domination by Assyria and Babylon], Israel was grasping at straws: "Put summarily: Israel was now no nation, but the gods of other nations, including the greatest powers, were not really gods; and Yahweh was the sole force over both."[90]

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[87] Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 75.

[88] Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 76.

[89] Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 76; brackets added.

[90] Smith, *Origins*, 9.

Smith specifically defines Israelite monotheism as "the worship and belief in Yahweh and disbelief in the reality of other deities,"[91] believing that such a view came out of Israel's monolatry. "While Israel could tolerate other peoples' worship of their deities, Yahweh was ultimately the most powerful deity in the cosmos."[92] Smith is convinced that this occurred "just before and during the Exile (587-539)."[93] In fact, he suggests that "to use biblical texts to ground monotheism, or even monolatry, historically before the seventh century is difficult."[94]

Hess suggests that Smith rejects monotheism in ancient Israel, preferring instead "to understand early biblical poems (Num. 23, 24; Deut. 32; Judg. 5; and Ps. 82) as indicating that Yahweh was a second-level deity subservient to El. Only later did Yahweh become identified with El and achieve first-level status in the pantheon." It was the sociological changes for Israel in the 7th and 6th centuries at the hands of Assyria and Babylon, according to Smith, that led Israel to "a belief in only one deity."[95]

In the end, for Smith there has been a major shift in how biblical scholarship views and understands Israelite religion. "Although the biblical witness accurately represented the existence of Israelite worship of Baal and perhaps of Asherah as well, this worship was not so much a case

[91] Smith, *Early History*, 1.

[92] Smith, *Early History*, 2-3.

[93] Smith, *Early History*, 3 [dates are BC].

[94] Smith, *Origins*, 150.

[95] Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 77.

of Israelite syncretism[96] with the religious practices of its 'Canaanite' neighbors, as some biblical passages depict it, as it was an instance of old Israelite religion."[97]

This perspective assumes that the study of Ugaritic and other ancient Near Eastern cultural history, including its literary and material finds and the cultural connection with Israel to which they point, also indicate a *religious* connection. This perspective also intentionally calls into question the biblical text, which distinguishes Israel's religious experience from anything else happening in the ancient Near East.

B. Yehezkel Kaufmann

Yehezkel Kaufmann, professor of Bible at Hebrew University from 1949 until his death in 1963, spent his career studying Israel's religious history. His primary contribution "was his thesis that Israel's monotheism was not a gradual evolutionary development from paganism but an entirely new beginning, *sui generis*,[98] in religious history."[99],

Kaufmann acknowledges that "biblical tradition represents the fathers of the race and the patriarchs of Israel as monotheists,"[100] implying, therefore, that "Abraham is thus not represented

[96] Syncretism is the patterning of one's beliefs and practices at the influence of another. Throughout the OT, Israel was warned about mixing with the nations, whose religious affections would entice Israel to sin against Yahweh.

[97] Smith, *Early History*, 7.

[98] *Sui generis* means unique, one of a kind.

[99] "Yehezkel Kaufmann," Jewish Virtual Library: A Project of American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/kaufmann-ye-x1e25-ezkel.

[100] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 153 and 221.

as the founder of monotheistic religion. *He is but a link in the chain of monotheists that goes back to Adam*."[101]

As Kaufmann begins to narrow what defines Israelite monotheism, he chooses criteria that, at least for the most part, cannot apply to either the patriarchs or their primeval forebears. This narrowing he calls both *Israelite* and *historical* monotheism, using the terms interchangeably. Kaufmann identifies three criteria for this distinction, which he formulates in an "organic framework: apostolic prophecy, the battle with idolatry, and [the use of] the name of YHWH."[102] This framework suffices if one is only looking at the religion of Israel as it forms both as a people in the Exodus and as a nation under the monarchy. But this paper attempts to go further back than that, looking at *biblical* monotheism from Adam, suggesting that God provided a faithful line of witness from Adam to Abraham. It would appear that these two perspectives—Kaufmann's and that represented in this study—are not in opposition with each other, at least not at this point, but are simply approaching it from different vantage points. In fact, Kaufmann says that "not only is YHWH alone creator, but the first men are portrayed as monotheists. The special favor bestowed later upon Israel was universal in primeval times."[103]

Kaufmann's overall understanding of the true nature of monotheism from the primeval age onward is clear.[104] In his study, we see something quite different than the biblical standard he acknowledges. He begins his argument thus: "Hence it must be assumed that Israelite monotheism arose after the patriarchal age. The monotheism of the patriarchs, then, is the child of later

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[101] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 221; italics added.

[102] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 222; brackets added.

[103] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 295.

[104] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 222-23.

conceptions—the same that produced the monotheist cast of the primeval legends of Genesis."[105] He ends this notion with a question: "What, then, is the historical kernel in the tradition that calls YHWH 'God of the fathers,' and Abraham the father of the Israelite nation?"[106] His final answer comes at the end of that paragraph:

> Later legend seized upon Abraham and made him the father of Israelite religion. But the absence of the essential motifs [that is, Kaufmann's organic framework] of Israelite religion in patriarchal times indicates that it was not then that the monotheistic idea came into being. In the patriarchal age the tribes were formed and absorbed the culture of the lands through which they wandered. Their leaders and artists cultivated song and legend, wisdom and morality, righteousness and justice. But it was in Egypt that the new religious idea sprang forth that was to transform their life and the lives of many nations.[107]

While Kaufmann offers an entirely different perspective to explain Israel's monotheistic faith than the one put forth in this paper, it is helpful that he confirms that the biblical account takes it back to the primeval and patriarchal ages.

C. Nahum M. Sarna

Next we turn to Nahum Sarna, a Jewish scholar who in 1966 published a comprehensive commentary on the first book of the Pentateuch, *Understanding Genesis: The World of the Bible in the Light of History*. Sarna criticizes 19th century critical studies as being "guilty of many shortcomings,"[108] noting, for instance, "its failure to distinguish between the date of the final

[105] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 222.

[106] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 222.

[107] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 223; bracket added.

[108] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, xxiv.

editing of a work and the age of the material contained therein."[109] Yet he is convinced that critical studies must be reckoned with,[110] and that "far from presenting a threat to faith, a challenge to the intellect may reinforce faith and purify it."[111]

Sarna does not often directly address the concept of monotheism in his commentary, but his understanding of God clearly sets Him apart from the gods or idols of the nations. Toward the end of his introduction, Sarna indicates that "the germ of the monotheistic idea may, indeed, be found outside of Israel; but nowhere has monotheism ever been found historically as an outgrowth or development of polytheism. Nowhere else in the contemporary world did it become the regnant idea, obsessive and historically significant. *Israel's monotheism constituted a new creation, a revolution in religion, a sudden transformation*."[112]

Sarna believes that Genesis 11, the Tower of Babel narrative, is a major turning point in biblical historiography as it pertains to the theme of monotheism:

> A careful scrutiny of Scripture shows that it regards monotheism as the original religion of mankind. According to this view, not a trace of paganism is to be found in the world until the rise of ethnic divisions among the children of men. That is to say, a universal monotheistic era in human history is thought of as coming to an end with the generation of the dispersal of mankind.
>
> This idea is not explicitly stated in the sources. But it is tacitly assumed to be the case that the appearance of idolatry is coeval[113] with the rise of nations. Henceforth, the knowledge of the true God is regarded as being the exclusive possession of Abraham and his descendants. The other peoples of the world, as distinct from individuals like Abimelech, for example, are considered to have been polytheistic

[109] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, xxv.

[110] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, xxiv.

[111] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, xxiii.

[112] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, xxviii; italics added.

[113] Coeval means to share a common starting point.

> from the beginning. The stage is thus set for the launching of the people of Israel upon its historic course as a 'light to the nations,' as the bearer of the message of monotheism to the world.[114]

Despite the several affirmations that we find in this citation, there are also several points that are unclear. Sarna suggests that "the knowledge of the true God is regarded as being the exclusive possession of Abraham and his descendants," but he does not indicate how they came to possess this knowledge. Was it by inheritance, or divine revelation, or both? Sarna also states that "the other peoples of the world…are considered to have been polytheistic from the beginning." From the beginning of what? From the Tower of Babel? Finally, in concluding that "the stage is thus set for the launching of the people of Israel…as the bearer of the message of monotheism to the world," it would be helpful to understand the nature of this patriarchal link between "monotheism as the original religion of mankind" and this launching of Israel into bearing witness of it to the world.

Much of Sarna's emphasis comes from his study of Genesis, suggesting that the Hebrew Genesis, whether intended as science or merely "to convey statements of faith," introduces the whole of biblical literature. "It tells us something about the nature of the one God who is the Creator and supreme sovereign of the world and whose will is absolute. It asserts that God is outside the realm of nature, which is wholly subservient to Him. He has no myth; that is, there are no stories about any events in His life. Magic plays no part in the worship of Him."[115]

Sarna says of the "solemn and majestic simplicity" of Genesis, "It has no notion of the birth of God and no biography of God. It does not even begin with a statement about the existence of God. Such speculation would have been unthinkable at this time. To the Bible, God's existence is

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[114] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 68-69.

[115] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 3.

as self-evident as is life itself…Genesis, therefore, begins immediately with an account of the creative activity of the pre-existent God."[116]

Sarna's picture of the God of the Hebrews is one which stands quite apart from the pagan traditions of the ANE:

> Since, according to pagan concepts, man's destiny is controlled by two separate forces, the gods and the powers beyond the gods, it was inevitable that magic became an integral part of pagan religion. Man had to be able to devise the means of activating those forces superior even to the gods. Religion, as a consequence, became increasingly concerned with the elaboration of ritual designed to propitiate the numerous unpredictable powers that be.
>
> Anyone who reads the Hebrew Bible, especially the Book of Psalms, is aware that the ancient Israelite was as struck by the majesty of natural phenomena as was any of his pagan neighbors. But unlike them, he did not profess to see God within those phenomena. The clear line of demarcation between God and His creation was never violated. Nowhere is this brought out more forcefully than in the Hebrew Genesis account.[117]

While there remain questions about the nature of the patriarchal link from the primeval age to the people and religion of Israel, Sarna helps us grasp the vast difference between the God portrayed in the Bible and the gods and idols of the nations, including the clear distinction between God and His creation.

Each of the three scholars up to this point have spoken at length concerning the subject of monotheism in early Israel, and have had more than peripheral thoughts about the matter. But now we turn to two other groups of scholars. Their opinions are not less weighty than these previous three, but they have written these opinions in the midst of writing about other subjects.

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[116] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 10.

[117] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 11.

D. Magisterial Scholarship

There is a class of biblical scholarship that has influenced theological and other biblical disciplines for well over a century. These individuals are not only great thinkers, often thinking beyond their peers, but have the power to communicate those thoughts in ways that have changed the discipline.

1. Edmond Jacob

We begin with Edmond Jacob who was professor at the University of Strasbourg and author of *Théologie de l'Ancien Testament* in 1955. In a journal article three years later, Delbert Hillers says that Jacob's book was "the only Protestant Old Testament theology in the French language" since 1922, and that Jacob's "method is to rearrange the materials of a history of religion into a systematic scheme."[118]

Jacob suggests that "the generic name of God amongst all people of Semitic tongue, except the Ethiopians, is expressed by the help of the root אל, *ilu*, *allah*, etc.,"[119] and suggests that scholars have not come to agreement about its etymology; he gives the details about four possible suggestions,[120] then continues, "El designates any god, but alongside this use as a common noun we find the name El as the proper name of a particular deity. The existence of a particular god named El is not only important for the origins of the religion of Israel, but it raises the problem of

[118] Delbert R. Hillers, "An Historical Survey of Old Testament Theology Since 1922," *CTM* (September 1958): 665; it is almost impossible to find biographical information about Jacob; this line in Hillers' journal article is a slight clue to Jacob's achievements.

[119] These "names" or words are a few that express *El*, the generic title meaning "god."

[120] Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 43.

a primitive Semitic monotheism…The thesis of an original monotheism has been upheld more recently and with more convincing arguments."[121]

But as Jacob continues, it is clear that he is suggesting that religion in Israel, as in the whole of Canaan, is an evolution—for Israel, an evolution that is moving from polytheism to monotheism. He writes,

> The religion of the patriarchs was characterized…by the cult of familiar gods associated with the individual or group of individuals who have chosen them for their protectors; that religion predisposed them to accept later on the cult of Yahweh…The contact of the ancestral Israelite religion, at the head of whose pantheon was probably found Shadday, with the Canaanite religion dominated by the figure of El, took place in many stages.[122]

Jacob outlines three stages of this evolution: the first happened during the patriarchal age, he suggests, with so many points of contact "between Shadday of the mountains and El the powerful…that the fathers were able to feel relatively at home in the Canaanite environment." The second was when Israel became a nation and Yahweh "quickly took the place of the gods of the fathers."[123] In these first two stages, Jacob is clearly painting the picture of an evolution. When he gets to the third stage, he sees Yahweh substituting his name for the names of other deities "to show that there was no other god (el) besides himself":

> The substitution of this latter name [Elohim] for that of Yahweh, which took place systematically in the Pentateuch and the Psalter and occasionally elsewhere, carries an echo of this process of integration; integration could only have taken place at a time when the cult of El was sufficiently 'Yahwistic' to present no danger of paganization and when the spiritual authority of Yahweh was strong enough for there to be no danger in his assuming a garb which was originally pagan or at least alien.[124]

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[121] Jacob, *Theology of the OT*, 44.

[122] Jacob, *Theology of the OT*, 46.

[123] Jacob, *Theology of the OT*, 46.

[124] Jacob, *Theology of the OT*, 47; brackets added.

Jacob finally suggests that in this evolution of religion, there is finally "the totality of the divine reunited in one person." What Jacob describes is an evolution from polytheism to monotheism in three stages. But later he writes,

> On the particular terrain of Israel's religion, monotheism takes shape at the moment when Moses has the revelation of a god infinitely superior in power to the gods of the fathers and to all variety of Palestinian *'elim*.[125] By the mediation of Moses the people have the experience that a single God can be so powerful as to impose himself alone for the worship of the faithful. Yahweh does not present himself to Moses as the only God but as the jealous God, which leaves the door open for the existence of other gods but carries for the covenant people the absolute prohibition against believing that these gods have any power over them.[126]

It is not clear why Jacob makes reference to Moses and "all variety of Palestinian *'elim*" since the biblical record does not put Moses in Palestine (that is, Canaan) at any time throughout his leadership. But his footnote to "all variety of Palestinian *'elim*" seems to contradict his earlier suggestion of an evolution: "One cannot speak of evolution within the faith of Israel towards monotheism, for from the moment when Israel becomes conscious of being the people chosen by *one* God it is in practice a monotheistic people; and so one can speak with Albright…on condition however that by this term there is understood a conviction of faith and not a result of reflection."[127]

Not only is this not an evolution from polytheism to monotheism, but Jacob also contradicts the earlier sense that monotheism comes as a development of mankind to meet human need, and not a revelation. But here he has suggested that it happened when they realized they had been chosen by God.

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[125] In Hebrew, *'elim* is the plural of *el*, "god."

[126] Jacob, *Theology of the OT*, 65-66.

[127] Jacob, *Theology of the OT*, 66; italics original.

2. Walther Eichrodt

Next we move to Walther Eichrodt, who was born at the end of the 19th century, and who was a German Protestant OT scholar, successor to Albrecht Alt at the University of Basel, where he taught until 1966.[128] Eichrodt suggests that at the beginning of Israel's history one cannot find an "absolute monotheism," which he defines as "a realization that apart from Yahweh no gods whatsoever existed… It is easy enough to show that in ancient Israel the reality of other gods beside Yahweh was *still* a fact to be reckoned with."[129] He continues, "Nowhere in the earlier Old Testament writings do we find a clear statement of the monotheistic idea. Not until the seventh century [B.C.] does the monotheistic formula appear which describes Yahweh as the true God over all the kingdoms of the earth, the only God, in contrast to whom all 'gods' are nothing."[130]

Eichrodt suggests that the contrast that is shown by Deutero-Isaiah[131] between "Yahweh and the gods of the heathen, and stresses the nothingness of the latter in face of the God of Israel" came only after a "long journey," which begins with exclusiveness to "their El" in the patriarchal age, and "a conviction of Yahweh's *oneness*" that emerges in the Mosaic period.[132] But in a footnote, Eichrodt narrows the definition of monotheist: not simply "one who teaches the existence

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[128] Elmer A. Martens, "Walther Eichrodt," in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 482.

[129] Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, trans. J. A. Baker, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 220; italics mine. By using the word *still*, Eichrodt is suggesting an evolutionary approach to Israelite religion.

[130] Eichrodt, *Theology of the OT*, 1:221; brackets added.

[131] Deutero-Isaiah is a reference to the latter half of Isaiah's prophecy (chapters 40-66), a reference which comes from the historical-critical assumption that Isaiah was written by two different biblical authors.

[132] Eichrodt, *Theology of the OT*, 1:221-22; italics original.

of only one God," but who denies "the existence of other gods." As he concludes this footnote, Eichrodt suggests that "this is precisely the point which cannot be established from the evidence concerning Moses and the early period of Israel."[133]

Despite this denial of an absolute monotheism in early Israel, Eichrodt suggests that "during the early history of Israel, however, the consuming holiness of God and the experience of his annihilating majesty provided a substitute for the missing monotheistic belief. This was the only way in which the as yet unexplained relationship of Yahweh to other gods could be prevented from becoming a danger to his absolute value for Israel."[134]

On the matter of monotheism, Eichrodt concludes:

> The development of Old Testament religion shows that the essential factor in the emergence of a vital and moral monotheism was not philosophical speculation, but the experience of God's close and living reality. If monotheistic belief had secured a foothold in Israel prematurely, it would have made no progress… It was only because their God Yahweh was at hand to dominate the whole of life and to give practical proof of his reality that Israel's picture of God was able to grow, and that her concepts could be expanded without endangering the inward vitality of her religion."[135]

But was it only in later Israel that the nation experiences "God's close and living reality"? Was God not "at hand to dominate the whole of life and to give practical proof of his reality" during the Exodus? Was He not equally present with Joseph? and the patriarch's before him? and the primeval saints before them? The biblical evidence would suggest that in the flood narrative and at Babel "God Yahweh was at hand to dominate the whole of life and to give practical proof of his reality." To relegate that experience only to the exilic and post-exilic period does not do

[133] Eichrodt, *Theology of the OT*, 1:221-22, footnote.

[134] Eichrodt, *Theology of the OT*, 1:224.

[135] Eichrodt, *Theology of the OT*, 1:227.

justice to "the consuming holiness of God and the experience of his annihilating majesty" which Eichrodt describes as the substitute for an earlier monotheism.

3. Gerhard von Rad

Next we turn to Gerhard von Rad, a 20th century German theologian who, in rejecting the atomization of the OT,[136] "emphasized the final form of a text, the whole unit, and viewed the ever-new interpretation in the light of God's action in history."[137] Von Rad has made significant contributions to OT scholarship, and is described as having "a skepticism bathed in evangelical fervor."[138]

The context of von Rad's comments on monotheism in Israel centers on both Israel's cultic experience and the first commandment. Von Rad asserts,

> It is in the cult first and foremost and not in direct personal relationship with God that Israel encounters Jahweh's zeal, this most personal of all the manifestations of his being. And this brings us up against the primary characteristic of Israel's cult, Jahweh's curt claim, in the first commandment, to be the only God worshipped… Thus Jahweh's zeal consists in the fact that he wills to be the only God for Israel, and that he is not disposed to share his claim for worship and love with any other divine power.[139]

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[136] James L. Crenshaw, "Von Rad, Gerhard," in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters,* ed. Donald K. McKim (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 526; Crenshaw suggests that at the turn of the 20th century, the form-critical approach to the OT "depended on the isolation of the smallest oral units underlying longer written texts. The older source criticism, applied with increasing exactitude to the Pentateuch, also focused on brief phrases or single words and tended to ignore the final form of a given text."

[137] Crenshaw, "Von Rad," 527.

[138] Crenshaw, "Von Rad," 527.

[139] Von Rad, *OT Theology,* 1:207-08.

"The first commandment is not an axiom," von Rad writes; "on the contrary, it is Jahweh himself who proves that he is the only God; and this he does through his deeds in history—'I am Jahweh who brought you out of the land of Egypt.'"[140] And thus God demands that for Israel there shall be no other gods.

Von Rad suggests that "the concept 'other gods' is certainly to be understood in the widest sense of the term. But in connexion with it what we have to think of is not so much the 'high gods' of the great empires, Marduk in Babylon or Amon in Egypt, but rather such deities whose worship was indigenous to Palestine, and who could be real sources of temptation to Israel, e.g. Baal, Bethel, Dagon, Astarte, Anath, Asherah, etc."[141]

Von Rad goes on suggest that "the first commandment has initially nothing to do with monotheism: on the contrary, as the way in which it is formulated shows, it is only comprehensible in the light of a background which the historian of religion designates as polytheistic. Even the way in which Yahweh introduces himself, 'I am Jahweh, our God,' presupposes a situation of polytheism.[142]

Von Rad insists that Israel's true knowledge of Yahweh comes in the cultic setting and not in relationship, and certainly not in relationship that can be characterized as available and vulnerable.

[140] Von Rad, *OT Theology*, 1:210.

[141] Von Rad, *OT Theology*, 1:208.

[142] Von Rad, *OT Theology*, 1:210-11.

4. Claus Westermann

And finally, we turn to Claus Westermann, who is the most contemporary of these magisterial theologians, living into the 21st century. Westermann was a German theologian who taught OT at the University of Heidelberg from 1958 until his retirement in 1978. In order to understand Westermann's approach to the subject of monotheism, it is necessary to step back with him and look from a larger vantage point. He suggests that in much of Western theology, there is "a tendency to separate the human response in speaking and action from theology in the real sense, from dogmatics,"[143] but that this tendency does not give us a full understanding of what the Old Testament says about God. He explains,

> We are concerned here with a particularly important point for the theology of the Old Testament. If one understands the story told by the Old Testament as an interaction, then the human response becomes one of the three integral parts of the Old Testament and belongs to everything said in the Old Testament about God, from creation to apocalyptic. In all God says and does one needs to ask how people react, since all of God's acts and speaking is directed towards eliciting a response.[144]

Westermann sees this interaction "between God and his creation, between God and humanity, between God and his people" as a history that is developing. But what makes this "incomprehensibly rich profusion of events" a history "is the oneness of God which Israel confesses: 'The LORD our God is one LORD' (Deut. 6:4)."[145] He then suggests that "we can, with extreme simplification, differentiate three stages of talk about God's oneness."

For the first stage, Westermann cites Exodus 20:2-3 and Deuteronomy 5:6-7, suggesting that in this first commandment, "there is no reflection here on the existence or non-existence of

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[143] Westermann, *Elements of OT Theology*, 27.

[144] Westermann, *Elements of OT Theology*, 27.

[145] Westermann, *Elements of OT Theology*, 32.

other gods. The verses proceed from the fact that other people worship other gods. The commandment is concerned only that Israel has only one God as Lord, whom it can trust and serve." For the second stage, Westermann cites Deuteronomy 6:4, suggesting that "this confession to the one God grew out of a long and difficult struggle for the independence of the Yahweh-faith in polytheistic surroundings." For the third stage, Westermann cites Isaiah 43:10—written "against the background of the collapse and exile"—and suggests "in this time of helplessness, God's oneness found its strongest expression in the confession of his singularity… Before Deutero-Isaiah no one ever spoke a sentence this unequivocal and this fundamental concerning God's singularity. This confession to Yahweh as the one God has the consequence that divinity is denied for any other gods."[146]

In that context, Westermann's concludes:

> "Monotheism" is not important for the Old Testament in the theoretical sense as a sublime, spiritual conception of God. It is vitally important for Israel, however, that its God as the One is not turned toward other gods with his divinity, but rather alone toward his people and his creation. Because there is no history of the gods for Yahweh, he is the God of history. Because God is One, there could be no myths for Israel in the sense of theogony.[147] Thus his whole being as God unfolds in the history with his people, with humanity, with creation. The fact that God is One, and that he is the God of history, are two sides of the same understanding of God.[148]

Therefore, Westermann sees monotheism developing over a period of time in these three stages, with the first stage at Sinai and its full development during the exilic and post-exilic period. It would also appear that he does not see it extending back into the patriarchal or primeval ages.

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[146] Westermann, *Elements of OT Theology*, 32-33.

[147] Theogony is a genealogy of the gods.

[148] Westermann, *Elements of OT Theology*, 33.

E. Evangelical Scholarship

1. John H. Walton

As we move into the evangelical camp, we begin with John H. Walton, an OT scholar and Wheaton College professor. Walton is the author of *The Lost World of Genesis One,*[149] *The Lost World of Adam and Eve,*[150] *The Lost World of the Flood* (co-authored with Tremper Longman III),[151] and *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*.[152] While Walton has written extensively about the primeval age, he does not speak at length about monotheism itself. In this final monograph listed above, Walton suggests that in Israel's focus on divine functions and relationships, they believed that Yahweh had revealed himself—"not only his actions but also aspects of his character…and that he expected them to co-identify with him on both levels."[153]

However, Walton suggests that Israel's way of approaching life was no different than the approach of others in the ancient Near East. As Walton looks at the patriarchal age in particular, he is convinced that neither Abraham nor his family have a monotheistic religious heritage. "It is clear, then," says Walton, "that the biblical record does not attribute monotheism of any sort to the family of Abraham. In addition, we would search in vain for any passage in which Abraham or

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[149] Walton, *Lost World of Genesis One*.

[150] John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2-3 and the Human Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015).

[151] Tremper Longman III and John H. Walton, *The Lost World of the Flood: Mythology, Theology, and the Deluge Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018).

[152] John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006).

[153] Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 71.

any of the patriarchs denies the existence of other gods."[154] That being said, Walton suggests that "nevertheless, the perspective of the biblical text is that all of the worship of Abraham that is recorded is focused on a single deity…that [he] showed a distinct preferential loyalty to a single god."[155]

The essential evidence of monotheism, however, cannot simply be that an individual does not deny the existence of other gods. There must be more, and Walton does not offer more. He merely suggests that Abraham and the patriarchs do not have a monotheistic religious heritage.

2. John N. Oswalt

John N. Oswalt, however, has a very different perspective. Oswalt, an OT scholar and distinguished professor of OT at Asbury Theological Seminary, declares that "the Old Testament vehemently and continuously insists that Yahweh is one and that no other being is in the same category with him."[156] He asks, "How many monotheistic religions are there in the world today? There are only three: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And where do these three get their monotheism? All from one source: the Old Testament."[157]

Oswalt suggests that, although Israel was surrounded by "peoples who believed in multiple gods," the Bible does not initially require the denial of other gods, but only that no other shall be recognized by them. "Soon enough in the text," Oswalt declares, "comes the categorical denial:

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[154] Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 112.

[155] Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 112-13; brackets added.

[156] John N. Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 64.

[157] Oswalt, *Bible among the Myths*, 64.

'There is no god besides me' (Deut. 32:39), or 'For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens' (Ps. 96:5)."[158]

In a clearly related matter, Oswalt strongly suggests that there are opposing worldviews that are in play in the ANE. The first is *continuity thinking*, which sees no distinction between God (or a deity) and the created world—the two are of one essence; the second worldview is that of transcendence, which sees Yahweh as wholly other than creation—which undergirds the faith of Israel as revealed in the OT.

"I have argued elsewhere," Oswalt writes, "that Egyptian religion was headed in a monotheistic direction during the last years of the second millennium BC.[159] But not having a philosophical principle to support that thrust, they could not maintain it and fell back into the grossest polytheism…Continuity simply makes monotheism impossible, while transcendence does make it possible, and indeed, requires it. Only one being can truly transcend all other beings."[160]

Oswalt concedes that Israel's daily living did not always measure up to the divine expectation, suggesting that "the alternative to transcendence has never lost its appeal…But none of [Israel's failure] changes the reality of the text!…Alone in the ancient world the Old Testament insists throughout on a way of thinking about reality that is unique."[161]

On one final point Oswalt insists:

> [It will not do] to say that this philosophical unity was imposed on the text late in the postexilic period. Even if we were to grant this dubious proposal, we would still

[158] Oswalt, *Bible among the Myths*, 64, footnote 2.

[159] Oswalt cites his earlier work: *The Concept of Amon-Re as Reflected in the Hymns and Prayers of the Ramesside Period* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1968); *idem*., *Bible among the Myths*, 81.

[160] Oswalt, *Bible among the Myths*, 82.

[161] Oswalt, *Bible among the Myths*, 83; brackets added.

> have to answer the question: How did this total worldview come to be imposed? Are we to think that the Israelite literature had been continuity-based and thus polytheistic, fertility-saturated, antihistorical, and idolatry-filled prior to the exile, and then that during the chaotic four hundred years between the return from the exile and the appearance of the Dead Sea Scrolls (ca. 150 BC) when the community was badly fractured with political and religious hatreds growing up on every side, that some group succeeded in tearing the literature right loose from its roots and transforming it absolutely so that no trace of support for continuity thought remains? I submit that that is to ask far too much."[162]

As is obvious within this section of our study, the opinions regarding monotheism in Israel, and in the patriarchal and primeval ages before Israel, range between the two extremes. The majority of opinion—Oswalt being the primary exception—is that Israel in every way was influenced by her ancient Near Eastern neighbors, not only culturally but in her religious perspectives.

IV. Defining the Study

The present chapter has provided the reader with brief surveys of scholarship for both biblical authority and biblical monotheism, surveys that provide an understanding of what key voices have written on these subjects which serve as foundational work for this study. In the case of biblical authority, the survey helps us understand the declining confidence placed upon the biblical text in a modern and postmodern Academy, and identifies the ground that must be regained if this study is to base its findings on the biblical text. In the case of biblical monotheism, the survey helps us understand the varied terrain with which this study must contend to make its point. The present study will take these surveys as a starting point, and move systematically toward our goal—that is, to discover and present linguistic evidence of biblical monotheism from Adam to Abraham.

[162] Oswalt, *Bible among the Myths*, 84; brackets added.

Chapter Two

In Chapter 2, we will attempt to identify the distinctives that define biblical monotheism. Some would argue that the ancients would not have thought about their religious experience in terms of either polytheism or monotheism; neither concept would have had meaning for them. Westermann suggests that monotheism "is not important for the Old Testament in the theoretical sense as a sublime, spiritual conception of God."[163] Smith believes that such terminology is anachronistic, that "the concept of monotheism…is largely a modern concern."[164] And their point is well taken. In fact, the terms *monotheism* and *polytheism* never appear in the pages of either testament. But does that mean that we cannot evaluate their religious experience in those terms, or that the sense of those terms is not present in the text? It is clear we can evaluate their experience in those terms, or Smith would not have written an entire monograph for that very purpose.

At the outset of this study, then, one must ask and answer the question as to the purpose for such a search. If the ancients would not have thought in those terms, and if the terms themselves do not occur in the Bible, why does it matter if the ancients were monotheists or not? In short, we make such a search because the biblical record assumes that the faith of each patriarch, and that of each primeval saint, was not a phenomenon, a rare, stand-alone experience that would begin with some "conversion" and end in death, but represents it as an inter-generational inheritance. What Yahweh established with Adam and Eve as He regularly walked with them in the garden, they in turn passed on to the next generation, who in turn were to develop it, walk in it, and share it with yet another generation, and presumably each generation had opportunity themselves to walk with the same God. This first divine-human relationship was intended to become the standard for all

[163] Westermann, *Elements of OT Theology*, 33.

[164] Smith, *Origins*, 11.

humanity, where Yahweh would make Himself both available and vulnerable to humanity, and humanity would respond by being available and vulnerable with Yahweh and with each other.

The relationship that Yahweh would forge with Adam would be modeled for each succeeding human in every generation, that what one shares becomes the next generation's inheritance and birthright. But the question remains, how do we identify monotheism in a setting in antiquity where early human experience seems to not yet think in those terms, and where the text seems to be silent about how to define their experience?

Kaufmann acknowledges that "biblical tradition represents the fathers of the race and the patriarchs of Israel as monotheists."[165] But as he clarifies what defines historical monotheism,[166] he chooses criteria that, at least for the most part, cannot apply to either the patriarchs or their primeval forebears. Kaufmann constructs what he calls an "organic framework: apostolic prophecy, the battle with idolatry, and [the use of] the name of YHWH."[167] Because of the criteria that he chooses, Kaufmann is able to conclude that "hence it must be assumed that Israelite monotheism arose after the patriarchal age."[168] But the problem is that these distinctives appear to be arbitrary. The points themselves can be proven, but how they are *the* criteria that point to monotheism is not shown. Each of these three criteria will be unpacked in a way that will demonstrate that, while it may be a point of measuring monotheism in early or late Israelite faith,

[165] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 153.

[166] Kaufmann uses the terms *historical monotheism* and *Israelite monotheism* interchangeably, making no distinction between them (see Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 222-23), in much the same way that Smith interchanges *biblical monotheism* and *Israelite monotheism* (see Smith, *Origins*, 4-6).

[167] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 222; brackets added.

[168] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 222.

it cannot be held as the overall standard by which monotheism is determined to be present or absent.

In our search for a broader set of criteria, then, we must look at those points which will directly impact the divine-human relationship. In part, the selected distinctives will speak to what the individual believes about God based either on some point of divine revelation or on some experience the individual has had. But each distinctive must also have some resultant bearing on how the individual now interprets and interacts with God, the self, and the world.

Therefore, the distinctives that best point to biblical monotheism will see Yahweh as the Creator of the cosmos, as the unmatched power in the universe, as the final authority in morality, and as demanding exclusivity in allegiance and worship. As each of these distinctives becomes part and parcel of the faith of each human person, he or she will grow in understanding who God is and how He relates to the world—whether a primeval world, an ancient Near Eastern world, or a world in later Judaism under siege by Assyria, Babylon, or Rome.

As the concluding section of this second chapter, there will be a discussion about the relational nature of monotheism. Far from an intellectual pursuit, as might be suggested by the criteria that have been selected, the thrust of the study is discovering the divine invitation to walk with Yahweh in obedience and fellowship.

Chapter Three

As we approach Chapter 3, we will again encounter Claus Westermann. Westermann, in addressing the matter of producing an OT theology that encompasses "its many and diverse forms," has suggested a very different approach than most: "If we wish to inquire concerning these broad lines determining the whole way in which the Old Testament speaks about God and yet not

overlook the many forms in which it occurs, we shall therefore have to start from *verb structures*."[169]

While producing an OT theology is not the thrust of our study, Westermann's point suggests that looking at monotheism from a verbal perspective is "moving *toward* the language of the Old Testament," and therefore an appropriate study. Van Pelt and Pratico indicate that the verb הלך (*halak*, "to walk") is the sixth most common verb in the whole of the OT, appearing 1,454 times across all verbal patterns.[170] Kohlenberger and Swanson indicate that the reflexive Hithpael, a major focus of this study, accounts for sixty-four occurrences in the OT, with eleven of these in the Pentateuch.[171]

With this in mind, then, we will explore the idea of relationship as a key ingredient of monotheistic religion, with an in-depth study of the Hebrew verb הלך (*halak*, "to walk"), including both meaning and syntax. The verb carries the obvious meaning of moving from one geographical location to another, but it also indicates behavior,[172] cultic activity,[173] and character.[174]

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[169] Westermann, *Elements of OT Theology*, 10.

[170] Miles V. Van Pelt and Gary D. Pratico, *The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 2-3; although Kohlenberger and Swanson suggest it appears 1,549 times: John R. Kohlenberger III and James A. Swanson, *The Hebrew-English Concordance to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 456.

[171] Kohlenberger and Swanson, *HECOT*, 457-66.

[172] See, for instance, Prov. 20:19a, גולה סוד הולך (*goleh sod holek*, "whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets" in ESV, and "a gossip betrays a confidence" in NIV). The idea in the use of the verb is that the individual is *walking in gossip*, that is, *slandering*.

[173] See, for instance, Jer. 25:6a, ואל תלכו במעשׂה ידיכם, (*veal telku bemaaseh yedekem*, "Do not go after other gods to serve and worship them"), which carries the sense of following or giving oneself to other gods.

[174] See, for instance, Prov. 8:20a, בארח צדקה אהלך (*beorakh tsedaqah ahallek*, "I walk in the way of righteousness"), which is not a physical but a spiritual walk.

But taking that verbal study one step further, we will look specifically at התהלך (*hithallek*), the reflexive Hithpael of הלך, *halak*). While the reflexive verb in English (and generally in Hebrew) connotes that the subject of the verb is also the object of the verb,[175] the reflexive of הלך (*halak*) suggests intentionality.

In our study of התהלך (*hithallek*), we will look specifically at its context in its sixty-four occurrences in the OT. We will also look at the Greek verbs that the Septuagint (LXX) translators employed to show the wide range of nuance behind this single Hebrew verb.

After gaining an understanding of both הלך (*halak*) and התהלך (*hithallek*), we will turn to the biblical texts in Genesis where התהלך (*hithallek*) appears, attempting to understand what the biblical writer is suggesting by his use of that Hebrew verb and verbal stem. This textual study will center on God's walking in the garden (3:8), Enoch walking with God (5:22, 24), Noah walking with God (6:9), and God's expectation that Abram would walk before Him (17:1).

This chapter will conclude arguing that what God expected of Abram, what distinguished Noah and Enoch, and what Yahweh Himself modeled in the garden, is portrayed in the biblical text as divine-human relationship that can be characterized as biblical monotheism.

Chapter Four

But is this search for linguistic evidence of biblical monotheism from Adam to Abraham merely an academic exercise, a process for the conferring of a degree? The hope is that there is an application that will touch three particular areas: the Academy, the Church, and the Reader.

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[175] The reflexive is most easily explained in the verb *to kill*, where the subject of the verb does the action that is described (that is, the subject *kills* someone or something), and the object of the verb receives the action that is being described (that is, the object *is killed*); in the reflexive, the person in question acts as both subject and object (that is, *they kill themselves*).

An Application in the Academy

If Yahweh's walk in the garden (Gen. 3:8) was intended to model what human relationship should be to both the divine Other and the human other—intended as a teaching experience—then the greatest application of this study in the Academy is to see the Academy walking intentionally with God (the divine Other) and with the Church (the Academy's human other). But what does intentionality look like within the Academy.

At present, we find in many sectors of the Academy the late dating of the OT text, the re-writing of Israel's history on the basis of a late date, and the presupposition that monotheism could not have come earlier than Sinai, but more likely in the exilic and post-exilic age. Together these have painted an entirely different picture than that which the Church has known historically. Except in rare situations, those presuppositions have held sway in university and seminary classrooms and lecture halls since the late 19th century. Although portions of this academic stronghold are showing signs of giving way, biblical scholars and their students are finding it difficult to speak in any other terms than to take those presuppositions as a given.

If it can be shown, however, that biblical monotheism in the primeval and patriarchal ages is not merely "biblical tradition," as Kaufmann suggests,[176] but a textual reality, modeled by God in the garden, rewarded by God in the cases of Enoch and Noah, and commanded of Abram (and thus the model for Israel), and that this new perspective is based on generative research in the linguistics of the biblical text, then it is hoped that this will have at least some small bearing on the world of academic scholarship. This impact will recommend where academic studies need to focus their attention as young scholars are trained to see the biblical text differently, and thus influence seminary classrooms and lecture halls filled with tomorrow's pastors and church leaders.

[176] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 222.

This intentional walk will call for the following commitments: (1) to the Reliability of Scripture, (2) to the Hard Pursuit of Truth, (3) to the Academic Process of Genuine Peer Review, and (4) to the Service of the Church.

An Application in the Church

Again, if Yahweh's walk in the garden (Gen. 3:8) was intended to model what human relationship should be to both the divine Other and the human other—intended as a teaching experience—then the greatest application of this study in the Church is to see the Church walking intentionally with God (the divine Other) and with the Individual who perhaps is the Reader, but clearly is the Christian believer. But what does intentionality look like in the Church?

As tomorrow's pastors and church leaders leave the seminary classroom and lecture halls to enter Christian ministry, most are sent to the front lines of congregational life, where what they have learned will be translated in their own preaching and teaching and pastoral care. There is the hope that 21st century lecterns and pulpits will be transformed by a renewed biblical authority that honors tradition—not simply because it *is* tradition, but because that tradition has stood the test of time and is backed by convincing arguments from the biblical text itself. This intentional walk will call the Church to stand firm (1) as the People of the Book, (2) as a Prophetic Voice into 21st Century Thought, and (3) as an Ambassadorial Presence in 21st Century Life.

An Application for the Reader

During the course of the writing of this paper, it is assumed that many readers will be scholars within both the Academy and the Church. But the findings of this study have also been written

with the lay reader in mind. The origins of our faith are not simply an academic matter, but are relevant for every Christian believer.

Finally, then, if Yahweh's walk in the garden (Gen. 3:8) was intended to model what human relationship should be to both the divine Other and the human other—intended as a teaching experience—then the greatest application of this study for the Reader is to see him or her walking intentionally with God (the divine Other) and with the Body of Christ (the human other). But what does intentionality look like for the Christian believer? This intentional walk, then, will call for intentionality in the areas of (1) devotional pursuit, (2) congregational pursuit, and (3) academic pursuit. In the end, it is hoped that those who make up the Body of Christ—pastors, lay personnel, and everyday saints—will seek to answer God's call to *walk before him intentionally* in our own generation.

Chapter Two – Distinctives of Biblical Monotheism

I. Introduction: Reconciling Misconceptions

This paper has taken as its thesis the idea that biblical monotheism was not a late development in post-exilic Israel, nor an Israelite invention at Sinai, but was the foundation of faith that God established from the beginning as He revealed Himself to Adam in the garden. In the first chapter, as we laid the groundwork for understanding current and historical scholarship on biblical monotheism, and on the biblical authority that undergirds such a study, it became clear that an academic division exists that is caused when one group of biblical scholars approaches the Bible with caution at best and disdain at worst, questioning both the reliability of its content and its authority over the human condition, while another group of scholars holds tenaciously to the doctrine of a Word of God that is both divinely revealed and authoritative. That division sends us into often-opposing camps and defined ideologies, often with little room for scholarly debate and compromise.

When a biblical scholar searches for his or her own place on the spectrum between these two poles, the decision is seldom as clear-cut as the labels would suggest. Sometimes scholars find themselves holding and attempting to defend positions that cannot be supported in the biblical text. But sometimes they are simply operating under a guise of misconception. This writer has been in that place more than once, and has had to look at the biblical evidence, determine what was tenable and what was not, and find a different way forward.

The first of these untenable positions that is misconceived is that Israel was culturally distinct from her ANE neighbors. Yet the Bible insists on the cultural connections within the ANE.

Smith rightly suggests that in Iron Age I we "cannot maintain a radical cultural separation" between the two.[177]

Genesis calls Ur of the Chaldeans the land of Terah's kindred (Gen. 11:28), which is a reference to Mesopotamia.[178] Abraham clearly grew up in the midst of Mesopotamia and her culture, and as he moved from Ur toward Canaan (Gen. 11:31),[179] he simply moved from one part of the ANE (which was Semitic, that is, the territory belonging to Shem and his heirs) to another (which was Hamitic, that is, the territory belonging to Ham and his heirs). Therefore, Abraham and his descendants were born and bred in the ANE, and shared a culture with their neighbors. Some theological camps struggle to concede this point.[180]

However, where *the Bible* draws the line is not whether the patriarchs shared a *cultural* history with their ANE neighbors, but whether they also shared a *religious* worldview with them—a worldview steeped in mythology and a pantheon of gods. This dichotomy between culture and religious worldview must be understood. John Currid agrees, and confirms the historical, geographical, and cultural connections, but argues that the OT worldview is "unique in the ancient Near East, and this is immediately confirmed by its all-pervasive monotheism."[181]

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[177] Smith, *Early History*, 6-7.

[178] Bill Arnold, in talking about Nimrod, suggests that "it is also possible that the Nimrod tradition of [Gen.] 10:8-12 reflects the non-Semitic origins of the earliest city builders in third millennium Mesopotamia, which may explain the surprising Hamitic connections for a predominantly Semitic culture in Mesopotamia"; see Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, NCBC 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 116-17.

[179] According to Gen. 11:32 and Acts 7:2-4, Abram did not actually enter Canaan until after the death of Terah.

[180] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, xxvi.

[181] John D. Currid, *Against the Gods: The Polemical Theolog of the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 9.

While much of biblical scholarship today indicates that both the patriarchs and early Israel were fully conversant with the rampant polytheism and its mythological worldview, this paper will suggest that they may have been conversant with it, but were certainly not comfortable with that alternate view of reality. Abraham was handed a different set of blueprints, and his call to "go from your country and your kindred and your father's house" (Gen. 12:1) was intended to make a clear distinction between the religious culture in southern Mesopotamia and that which God was now calling him to, continuing a faithful line of witness stretching all the way back to Adam. Culturally, the patriarchs were of ANE stock, but their worldview was informed by a different view of reality—a worldview that sees God as God Almighty, as Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things and all people. In those terms, the patriarchs were vastly different than any other people throughout the ancient world at that time.

But there are misconceptions on the other end of the spectrum as well. This point is clear when also reading Smith, who continues to speak about monotheism *and* polytheism in Israel. He is convinced that Israel, until the time of the Exile in the sixth century BC, was steeped in polytheism, worshiping the same gods as everyone else in the ANE.[182] When one reads the OT prophets in the years leading up to and following Israel's exile to Assyria and Judah's exile to Babylon, it is clear that to some degree this point must be conceded. Israel was careless in her devotion to Yahweh, and constantly had to be called back to her spiritual roots. She also opened herself up to be influenced in some way by her neighbors' religious practices and affections.

But there are two points of contention that must be resolved: first, the Bible would call this carelessness *idolatry*, not Israelite *polytheism*; and second, this idolatry was only possible because Israel failed to cleanse the land upon her entry into it. We will address these points in order.

[182] Smith, *Origins*, 10.

First, Smith is convinced from his study of texts found at Ugarit that there is a four-level pantheon of gods over which there is a primary ruler named El,[183] and that Israel eventually identified El with Yahweh. Citing Exodus 6:2-3,[184] Smith asserts that "this passage shows that Yahweh was unknown to the patriarchs. Rather, they are depicted as worshippers of El. In Israel El's characteristics and epithets became part of the repertoire of descriptions of Yahweh."[185]

Smith suggests that "a common assumption is that El's cult did not exist in Israel except as part of an identification with Yahweh. For ancient Israel, this question depends on whether Yahweh was a title for El or secondarily identified with El."[186] But at the foundation of Smith's writing is a small but consequential decision to take one road in place of another. At the beginning of his seventh chapter, Smith writes,

> The name of the god El is the same as the word for "god" in many West Semitic languages. This fact might be taken as evidence that as head of the West Semitic pantheon, El was regarded as the pre-eminent god (or, perhaps, divinity "incarnate")…The name of El occurs clearly first in personal names attested at Ebla, and then Mari and Amarna. In contrast, the evidence in other Mesopotamian personal names is contested. These cases may involve the generic term "god," not the proper name of El. Because of the lack of evidence for El's cult in Mesopotamia, the second view may be preferable.[187]

Smith comes to a crossroads and must decide whether אל (and its counterparts in non-Hebrew languages and texts) is *El* (a proper name) or *el* (a generic title, translated *God* or *gods*).

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[183] Smith, *Origins*, 45-46.

[184] Exod. 6:2-3 says, "God spoke to Moses and said to him, 'I am the LORD [יהוה, *yahweh*]. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty [אל שׁדי *el shaddai*], but by my name the LORD [יהוה, *yahweh*] I did not make myself know to them.'"

[185] Smith, *Origins*, 141.

[186] Smith, *Origins*, 140.

[187] Smith, *Origins*, 135.

In English that is easy since we would capitalize the proper name but not the generic title. But in Hebrew there is no such distinction since there are no upper and lower case letters. And Smith's decision is clear. The biblical text is full of references to *El*, a god who initially rules over the entire pantheon of gods, including eventually Yahweh.

Smith's bottom line is that אל in the biblical text is *El*, suggesting that the Bible shows Israelite polytheism throughout. But if we return to that crossroads and take a different turn, we will then read the biblical text more traditionally and in a more straightforward manner, with אל being both the generic term for "gods" when referring to the so-called gods of the nations, and "God" when referring to the generic title of Yahweh.

Smith objects that there are biblical texts that do not make sense in that reading,

> Biblical texts do attest to Yahweh and El as different gods sanctioned by early Israel. For example, Genesis 49:24-25 presents a series of El epithets separate from the mention of Yahweh in verse 18. This passage does not show the relative status of the two gods in early Israel, only that they could be named separately in the same poem. More helpful is the text of the Septuagint and one of the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QDeut^{j}) for Deuteronomy 32:8-9, which cast Yahweh in the role of one of the divine sons, understood as fathered by El, called Elyon in the first line:
>
> > When the Most High (Elyon) allotted peoples for inheritance,
> > When He divided up humanity,
> > He fixed the boundaries for peoples,
> > According to the number of the divine sons:
> > For Yahweh's portion is his people,
> > Jacob His own inheritance.
>
> The traditional Hebrew text (MT[188]) perhaps reflects a discomfort with this polytheistic theology of Israel, for it shows in the fourth line not "sons of El" but "sons of Israel." This passage, with the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scroll reading, presents a cosmic order in which each deity received its own nation. Israel was the nation which Yahweh received, yet El was the head of this pantheon and Yahweh

[188] *ABD* indicates that the term Masoretic Text (MT) "refers to the standard text of the Hebrew Bible, which is derived from the tradition of the Masoretes of Tiberias, the 'Tiberian Tradition.' This standard text has three main components: the letters, the vowel signs, and the accents. In most manuscripts, a fourth component, the marginal notes of the Masorah, is represented at least to some extent" (E. J. Revell, "Masoretic Text," *ABD* 4:597-98).

> only one of its members. This reading points to an old phase of Israel's religion when El held a pre-eminent position apart from the status of Yahweh.[189]

Smith may read this dichotomy into Deuteronomy 32:8-9, with El and Yahweh as different gods, but biblical scholarship has also dealt with this text and found a very different perspective. S. R. Driver, in his commentary on Deuteronomy, suggests that in verse 8, God is allowing the nations to "gradually settle themselves in separate localities," but God Himself is determining the boundaries, ensuring that there is a place for Israel.[190] Driver further writes that עליון (*elyon*, "Most High") is a poetical title for God, "perhaps suggested here by the thought of His supremacy over the nations of the world."[191] Robert Bratcher and Howard Hatton, in their UBS Handbook for Translators, argue, "The passage must not be read as though someone else had allotted Yahweh the people of Israel as his own possession; it is Yahweh himself who does this, who decides that Israel will be his own people."[192]

This paper is not suggesting that we merely gloss over these texts which create such problems for Smith and others, but that we do the hard work to answer the questions in an appropriate way. Although this alternate road will require some extensive work with the biblical text, it is a more honorable way to handle the questions than merely to throw out the generic use of אל (*El* or *el*) simply because it is not convenient for one's thesis. With this alternate approach,

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[189] Smith, *Origins*, 143.

[190] S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 3rd ed., International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 355.

[191] Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 355.

[192] Robert G. Bratcher and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Deuteronomy*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 538-39.

the biblical text stands intact and is not portrayed as the manufactured work of later monotheistic editors intent on hiding the earlier polytheism of both the patriarchs and early Israel.[193]

In fact, the biblical record, taken at face value, presents God as revealing Himself gradually: to Abraham and the patriarchs as אל שדי (*el shaddai*), and later to Moses and Israel as יהוה (*Yahweh*). That view would also suggest, then, that to the primeval saints He perhaps was simply known as אל (*el* "God"), a generic title. Terence Fretheim argues for this, suggesting, "The name of the people of God, Israel, is formed, not with the theophoric element *yāh*, but *'ēl*. This suggests that the link between Israel and El is historically prior to the link with Yahweh."[194]

Taking this position to the next step, the suggestion could easily be made that since there were only eight souls in all who came through the flood and that from these eight God repopulated the earth (Gen. 9:18-19), the peoples of the ANE initially only knew of אל (*el* "God"), who will later further reveal Himself to the patriarchs and to Israel by more expressive titles (like *El Shaddai*) and the divine name (*Yahweh*). Is it not possible that all the references in ANE literature, including that which was found at Ugarit and which Smith knows so well, is in fact referring to Yahweh throughout, and that the pantheon of gods that he finds in that literature and projects onto the biblical text is merely a distortion and degeneration of that truth which comes through the flood and is disseminated in every language to every clan and nation with the dispersal of humanity at Babel? There is as much foundation for that possibility as for the alternative that is being advocated on many scholarly fronts.

Therefore, when Smith argues that Israel was steeped in polytheism, this study suggests that the Bible would call Israel's carelessness *idolatry*, not Israelite *polytheism*. There is a second

[193] Smith, *Origins*, 155.

[194] Terence E. Fretheim, "אֵל," *NIDOTTE* 1:400.

contention that must also be addressed, which is Israel's descent into idolatry during the period of the judges and the monarchs. Smith would not characterize Israel's idolatrous tendencies in this period as a *descent*, suggesting instead that Israel was polytheistic from its inception, not because of Canaanite influence (that is, syncretism),[195] but simply because they shared a religious heritage with the whole of the ANE.[196]

But the biblical record tells another story, that such idolatry was only possible because Israel failed to cleanse the land upon her entry into it. Moses had warned in Deuteronomy 7 that if they failed to conquer the peoples of Canaan fully, they would be seduced into the beliefs and practices of Canaanite religion, and jeopardize their walk with Yahweh.[197] The biblical record also indicates that they failed to cleanse the land of Canaan, that they were indeed seduced by their ANE neighbors, and that they were eventually sent into exile because of it—the northern kingdom of Israel first to Assyria in 722 BC, and the southern kingdom of Judah to Babylon in 587 BC.

If we understand, then, that Israel was idolatrous instead of polytheistic, and that her idolatry was caused by her failure to cleanse the land of Canaan as Yahweh had commanded, the biblical record remains intact and Smith's aspersions otherwise begin to be muted. He suggests that "as a result of the editing of later monotheists, only scattered references to a number of other deities who belong to the middle levels of the pantheon have survived. Indeed, the Bible hardly provides an objective or complete picture of Israel's religion, because of significant editorial

[195] Smith, *Early History*, 4.

[196] Smith, *Origins*, 14.

[197] See particularly Deut. 7:1-5, 21-26. Also in Josh. 9, as Israel is being deceived by the Gibeonites, we find in v. 24 that this divine command to destroy the Canaanites was known outside of Israel as well.

selection."[198] By "objective" and "complete," Smith is suggesting that a biblical record that offers an alternative view of reality in ancient Israel other than that which he finds in the Ugaritic texts could not be an accurate account. Perhaps the Bible does not speak of these mid-level gods because they truly are non-existent and had no material value for the people who follow Yahweh, and perhaps the Ugaritic texts themselves portray a distorted view of reality—a reality which the Ugaritic people have adopted but which does not represent the reality that Yahweh has revealed from the beginning of human history.

Therefore, if one understands ancient Israel from a biblical perspective, it must be agreed that the patriarchs were born as a people of ANE cultural stock, having come out of southern Mesopotamia and entering into Canaan, and that later Israel as a nation carelessly dabbled with idolatry—what Smith would call polytheistic tendencies. But even with that understanding, we must ask several questions. First, does the patriarchs' cultural heritage automatically determine their religious heritage? Second, are there ways of distinguishing what that alternate religious experience would look like in terms of faith and practice?

II. Yehezkel Kaufmann's Organic Framework

We begin this discussion with Yehezkel Kaufmann because he is convinced that the Bible represents biblical monotheism in the primeval and patriarchal ages, and in the early stages of Israelite religion. We also begin with Kaufmann because he has laid out specific criteria for determining the presence or absence of biblical monotheism.

From the beginning Kaufmann seems confident in laying out the biblical perspective of monotheism as it relates to both the patriarchal and primeval ages—including the propositions that

[198] Smith, *Origins*, 155.

"biblical tradition represents the patriarchs as monotheists," and that "it is the view of the Bible that primeval men were monotheists."[199] This biblical view hinges on the fact that "there is no trace of idolatry" in the first eleven chapters of Genesis—a fact that changes at the Tower of Babel—and that "from Genesis 12 the worship of the one God is maintained by Abraham and his descendants alone, while the rest of the world—aside from such individual exceptions as Melchizedek—are idolaters." His conclusion: "Abraham is thus not represented as the founder of monotheistic religion. *He is but a link in the chain of monotheists that goes back to Adam*."[200]

But while Kaufmann is able to represent the biblical perspective well, he argues that such a perspective does not represent the reality of human history. He states that "there is no evidence for the biblical notion that the religion of primitive men was monotheism," but the idea "is a notion rooted in Israelite narration of primeval history in monotheistic terms. It goes without saying," Kaufmann continues, "that Israel's patriarchs were also included in this monotheistic history. Biblical legend could hardly have regarded them as different in that respect from Adam, Enoch, Noah, and the rest."[201]

The real problem with Kaufmann's conclusions, however, is that he identifies particular criteria for determining the presence or absence of biblical monotheism, suggesting that these criteria are always present when historical monotheism is found. He thinks that there is an "organic framework" which determines historical monotheism: "apostolic prophecy, the battle with idolatry, and the [use of the] name of YHWH."[202]

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[199] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 221.

[200] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 221; italics added.

[201] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 222.

[202] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 222; brackets added.

But he has chosen criteria that seem intended to preclude an earlier monotheism than that which was born in their Egyptian experience,[203] and concludes that "the monotheism of the patriarchs, then, is a child of later conceptions—the same that produced the monotheist cast of the primeval legends of Genesis."[204]

It is helpful to our study to look at each of these criteria from Kaufmann's perspective, because it gives us a clue what others have looked for in determining how far back monotheistic faith can be traced. Although this study will argue that he sets criteria that are too restrictive, Kaufmann is clear about what he is settling on as evidence.

The first criterion in his organic framework is *apostolic prophecy*. In the first five pages of his chapter on "The Origins of Israelite Religion," Kaufmann identifies the role of the apostolic prophet in Israel's religion, beginning with Moses. "The verb 'send' is the heart of the divine call to an Israelite prophet," he writes, citing the divine call to Moses, to Isaiah, to Jeremiah, and to Ezekiel. Kaufmann's description of this prophetic role attests to the biblical standard for Israelite prophecy:

> The prophet acts on behalf of God, not of man. His function is not to answer men's inquiries, like the pagan prophet or diviner, but to do and say only that required by God. He may be sent against his will, coming before the people unasked, and bearing a message they do not wish to hear. There is no flight from his task, and he must often be specially fortified to endure it. The idea is that apostolic prophecy is entirely the product of a transcendental cause: God's desire to reveal himself and his will to men.[205]

Kaufmann sees in Israelite history a succession of prophets not found in any pagan setting. In fact, he suggests that "paganism does not know of a continuous, generations-long succession of

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[203] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 221.

[204] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 222.

[205] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 213.

prophets…[but] it is otherwise with Israelite prophecy, which was conceived of as a continuous commissioning of men of God throughout the ages."[206] He further suggests that "apostolic prophecy is an Israelite creation," a transformation of that found in Canaanite or Asian prophetism: "The clairvoyant, the 'seer,' possessing a personal charism, is replaced by the prophet, the servant of God. In place of the diviner and interpreter of signs appears the messenger of God who proclaims his will. This change is coeval[207] with the monotheistic transformation of ancient Hebrew religion."[208]

But Kaufmann ties these two ideas together as necessarily connected. Because "there is no trace of apostolic prophecy" in Genesis—the reason being is that God does not send a prophet with a divine message during this period—biblical monotheism must also be ruled out. But since, from Kaufmann's own admission, "apostolic prophecy is limited to the people of Israel," and that "this exclusiveness is based on the notion that the pagans are not obliged to worship YHWH and are not punished for idolatry,"[209] then why would we expect God to send a prophet to either the primeval or patriarchal world with a message of repentance? Yet Kaufmann argues that "no patriarch is charged with a prophetic mission."[210] To set apostolic prophecy as a necessary indicator for

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[206] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 213.

[207] Coeval means to share a common starting point.

[208] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 214-15.

[209] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 214. I disagree with Kaufmann's characterization of the universal apostolic prophetic role—that "no missionary tendency is to be found in biblical religion. No prophet was ever sent to preach monotheism to the nations" (214). While God's message to Nineveh through the prophet Jonah 3:3-10 may not have directly touched on the subject of monotheism, the message of repentance is absolutely clear—repentance that both acknowledged God as having the ability to carry out His threat against their wickedness and violence, and their hope that God would relent if they would respond to the prophecy.

[210] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 222.

biblical monotheism is asking too much. Yahweh can be the sole deity for His people, even in the primeval and patriarchal ages, without sending a prophet to the world.

Kaufmann's second criterion in his organic framework is that there must be *a battle with idolatry*. He writes,

> Nowhere in Genesis is there a battle with idolatry. The divine covenants with the patriarchs promise personal protection and future material blessings. But they never involve a fight with idolatry, nor do the patriarchs ever appear as reproaching their contemporaries for idolatry. Indeed there is no religious contrast between the patriarchs and their surroundings. The tension between Israel and the pagan world arises first with the appearance of Moses.[211]

Kaufmann's portrayal is an accurate one: there is no biblical record of *conflict* with idolatry in either the primeval or patriarchal ages. It is clear that we see idolatry raising its head, but without patriarchal conflict. Yet to make conflict a necessary criterion is shortsighted. The *lack* of conflict with idolatry assumes one of two things. Either the primeval and patriarchal saints were themselves pursuing idol worship, and were thus not offended by what was happening around them—although in that case, the biblical record would also show Yahweh dealing with that issue in their lives. The other possibility is that in their holding tenaciously to their monotheistic faith, these primeval and patriarchal saints felt no threat from the increasing universal idolatry around them, but simply nestled into the heart of God, pursuing righteousness according to a developing sense of the overarching purposes of God in their lives and in the world. The absence of a *battle* with idolatry does not imply that they are somehow confused about the spiritual foundation that has been established with God.

Kaufmann's final criterion suggests that the monotheist must know *the divine name that was revealed to Moses at the burning bush*. The biblical record agrees with Kaufmann's

[211] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 222.

assessment that "the name YHWH was unknown to the patriarchal age."[212] It was at Horeb on the west side of the wilderness that God revealed Himself to Moses. The first message, after being told to remove his sandals because he was standing on holy ground, was "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exod. 3:6). Once God had made His purpose clear—that Moses lead the Israelites out of Egypt—Moses is given a further word:

> God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."[213] And he said, "Say to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I will be remembered throughout all generations." (Exod. 3:14-15)

Kaufmann is correct in his assessment that neither Abraham nor his sons in the patriarchal age, nor Adam and the primeval saints, know this divine name. In Genesis 17:1, God reveals Himself to Abraham as אל שדי (*el shaddai*, which the ESV translates as *God Almighty*). The text does not indicate by what name Adam, Enoch, Noah, or Shem know God. But this study would suggest that the absence of the Tetragrammaton as the divine identifier for them does not weaken their knowledge of God, nor imply that they are somehow confused about the spiritual foundation that has been established with God. Therefore, Kaufmann's organic framework may be important when measuring later Israelite religion against that of their ANE neighbors, but the absence of these criteria in earlier times cannot be made to mean an automatic absence of biblical monotheism.

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[212] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 222.

[213] The Hebrew is אהיה אשר אהיה (*ehyeh asher ehyeh*). Because the verb *ehyeh* ("to be") appears in the imperfect conjugation—that is, action or being that is not complete (English past tense)—it can either be translated *I am who I am*, or *I will be who I will be* (English present or future tense). In most modern translations, the Tetragrammaton (that is, יהוה, YHWH) is represented by the SMALL-CAPS spelling of LORD.

Since this study has found limitations in using Kaufmann's organic framework to discover the presence of biblical monotheism earlier than Exodus 3, the question that was posed earlier must still be answered. Are there ways of distinguishing what that alternate religious experience for Israel, in contrast to the experience of her neighbors in the ANE, would look like in terms of faith and practice? We now turn to the biblical record in search of criteria that will signal biblical monotheism in early Israel—but criteria that can also be found in both the patriarchal and the primeval ages, so that they cannot be summarily ruled out.

III. Distinctives of Biblical Monotheism

In this section, we will consider those distinctives which will signal biblical monotheism in the life and faith of Israel. Following an exposition of those distinctives, we will trace each through the patriarchal and then the primeval ages, establishing that each of those distinctives was not only known to those forebears of Israel, but aided them in their walk with God.

From early in its history as a people, Israel had a clear sense that they were a distinct people from their ancient Near Eastern neighbors. Although coming out of the same cultural stock, God had chosen them for another role—to bear witness to Him through covenant relationship. In Leviticus, Yahweh commanded Israel:

> You shall therefore keep all my statutes and all my rules and do them, that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out. And you shall not walk in the customs of the nation that I am driving out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I detested them. But I have said to you, "You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples…You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine. (Lev. 20:22-24, 26)

In one of his prayers to Yahweh, Moses acknowledged this calling to be distinct from the rest of the ANE: "For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your

people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?" (Exod. 33:16).

Even outside Israel, there was a clear understanding that she was a people belonging to Yahweh. Though little is known about Balaam the son of Beor, he certainly knew Yahweh, and had great fear of Him. In his first oracle Balaam said of Israel, "How can I curse whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced? For from the top of the crags I see him [that is, Israel], from the hills I behold him; behold, a people dwelling alone, and not counting itself among the nations!" (Num. 23:8-9; brackets added).

But in what ways were they different from other peoples and nations? As we begin to identify those distinctives that will set Israel apart as a people belonging to Yahweh alone, it is important to understand that we are looking for textual evidence in the Bible since that is the most complete record of what Israel inherited, believed, and lived out in daily life. It is helpful that the Bible has not hidden Israel's failures or covered over her weaknesses in order to present an ideal picture. Both Israel and her sons and daughters are flawed people living out their days and years, at times under the pressure of foreign armies and cultures, but always within the encompassing eye of Yahweh. The Bible, therefore, is a full record in that sense, showing Israel's failure and also her triumphs and devotion. For that reason, there is no need to look further than the biblical record, at least generally.[214]

[214] There is no intention of tracing these biblical distinctives in the ancient Near Eastern literature, since their experience is of no interest to our study. Sarna, in the introduction of his commentary, *Understanding Genesis*, clarifies his own approach, which has application at this juncture: "*Understanding Genesis* has taken full account of the numerous correspondences between the Hebrew Bible and the literature of Israel's earlier and contemporary civilizations in the Near East. But we have been mindful of the fact that it is not a difficult task to classify indiscriminately parallels between cultures or civilizations. Scholarly integrity demands that the conclusions drawn from the utilization of the comparative method be recognized for what they are—generalizations of limited value. One has to be sure that one is not dealing with mere

That Israel late in her experience was committed to Yahweh alone is seldom in question—at least not yet, although the historicity of Moses, of the Exodus, and of the United Monarchy have been seriously questioned in recent biblical scholarship; perhaps late monotheism in Israel is the next target.[215] At the moment, however, that is not in question. What *is* in question, however, is how early biblical monotheism is evident. Some have suggested that it is a reality in Israel only at the time of her exile. Smith suggests "no earlier than the ninth century as far as we know, and in the view of many scholars, hardly even this early,"[216] although Kaufmann points back to Moses and the Exodus.[217]

While we know almost nothing about the Hebrew experience during their period of slavery in Egypt, including their cultic or cultural life, the Bible represents them as continuing in some way in the line of the patriarchs, though removed by 400 years. Although there is biblical evidence that they had degenerated into idolatry during those 400 years,[218] Yahweh was now revealing

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superficial resemblances or with the independent development of analogical cultural features" (Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, xxvii). Besides, it is clear in the biblical record that Israel shared a culture with her neighbors in the ANE, but not their religious worldview. This study is primarily interested in the saints of God in both the patriarchal and primeval ages, and their experience with Yahweh.

[215] In his assessment of the effects of historical criticism, von Rad suggests that "there is no going back, nor has it yet indeed come to an end." (von Rad, *OT Theology*, 1:106).

[216] Smith, *Origins*, 14.

[217] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 223.

[218] We are told that Joshua gathered Israel to Shechem, and said, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods'" (Josh. 24:2). As Joshua moves from reciting key elements of their history to bringing his challenge to the people, he says in v. 14, "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD." The Hebrew text in v. 2 speaks of אבותיכם מעולם (*avotekem meolam*, "your fathers/ancestors from antiquity"), and suggests, ויעבדו אלהים אחרים (*vayavdu elohim akherim*, "and they served other gods"). But in the middle of these

Himself to them as "the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob" (Exod. 3:15), and was renewing with them the faith that their fathers had carried throughout the patriarchal age.

As we begin to establish distinctives that point to biblical monotheism, we turn first to the book of Deuteronomy to set the stage. At the end of their forty-year ordeal of wandering through the wilderness, burying their elders as they went, Moses brings the children of Israel once again to the edge of the Promised Land, but this time "beyond the Jordan," that is, on the eastern side of the River, instead of Kadesh-Barnea.[219]

It was at Kadesh Barnea that their fathers a generation earlier were first given the opportunity to cross into the Promised Land. The oldest among their numbers now—besides Moses, Joshua, and Caleb—is 59 years old (Num. 14:29). This new generation would face the same challenge those now dead had faced forty years earlier. Would their faith in Yahweh be

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two phrases is a descriptor without a connecting word: תרח אבי אברהם ואבי נחור (*terakh avi avraham vavi nakhor*, "Terah father of Abraham and father of Nahor"). The connector is key to understanding the verse, but must be supplied by the translator. Robert Alter suggests that Joshua's reminder is that "before Abraham these people were idolators, for the danger of backsliding into idolatry is uppermost in his mind throughout the speech" Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: Norton, 2019), 2:71. The NIV clarifies this when they translate verse 2, "Long ago your ancestors, *including* Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods" (also NET). Therefore, in light of this, v. 14 is suggesting that they put away the gods (1) their ancestors in Mesopotamia, including Terah, worshiped; and (2) that they themselves have worshiped during their Egyptian experience.

[219] In commenting on the inclusion of a reference to Kadesh Barnea in Deut. 1:1-2, when in fact the Israelites were on the east side of the Jordan River, Duane Christensen suggests that "the events at the end of the journey through the wilderness are connected with those at the beginning of that era" Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1—21:9, Revised*, WBC 6A (Dallas: Nelson, 2001), 14; W. L. Alexander suggests that "Moses reminds the Israelites that the distance between Horeb and Kadesh is eleven days…not to give them a piece of information, but rather to suggest to them how, in consequence of rebellion, a journey which might have been so easily accomplished, had been protracted through many wearisome years" W. L. Alexander, *Deuteronomy*, PC, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 3.

sufficient to finally cross the Jordan and enter the Land of Promise? Their elders had seen the mighty hand of Yahweh in securing their deliverance from Egypt, but that somehow did not engender trust as they stood on the frontier of Canaan. Would this new generation trust Him?

The book of Deuteronomy is a series of three sermons (chs. 1-3; 4-11; 12-30[220]) preached by Moses to the children of Israel over a period of forty days[221] as they stood at this monumental crossroads, each sermon warning them of earlier failures to believe and enter, and the great cost to the generation of their fathers. But before Moses begins the second sermon in chapter 4, he must put that word in perspective, indicating that disobedience can be costly:

> And I pleaded with the LORD at that time, saying, "O Lord GOD, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours? [25] Please let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon." [26] But the LORD was angry with me because of you and would not listen to me. And the LORD said to me, "Enough from you; do not speak to me of this matter again. [27] Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes westward and northward and southward and eastward, and look at it with your eyes, for you shall not go over this Jordan. [28] But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he shall go over at the head of this people, and he shall put them in possession of the land that you shall see." [29] So we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor. (Deut. 3:23-29)

In these final verses of chapter 3 we see an acknowledgement of Yahweh's unmatched power over kings and nations,[222] and over the inheritance He is giving to Israel. Moses pleads with Yahweh, "O Lord GOD, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as

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[220] J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book: A Basic and Broadly Interpretive Course of Bible Study from Genesis to Revelation*, (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1951), 1:212; Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament: Exodus—Ruth*, eds. F. C. Cook and J. M. Fuller (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1975), 267.

[221] Barnes, *Exodus—Ruth*, 267.

[222] See the record of the defeat of Kings Sihon in Deut. 2:26-37 and Og in Deut. 3:1-11.

yours?" (Deut. 3:24). It is clear that Moses can point to no other god in any sphere who is a match for Yahweh.

In this text we also see a humble acknowledgment that Yahweh has the authority to set the moral standard, and to issue judgment when that standard is not met. Moses makes reference to his own moral failure to hold Yahweh as holy before the people, and Yahweh's judgment that a leader will be held to a higher standard. He also acknowledges Yahweh's decision that he has been able to finish the wilderness wandering, and could *see* the Promised Land, but could not be the one to take Israel into that land (Num. 20:2-13; Ps. 106:32-33).

Finally in setting the context for what he would speak to the people in chapter 4, Moses demonstrates the possibility of personal relationship with Yahweh. Even after his epic failure, Moses was able to plead with Yahweh for favor, and Yahweh responded to him, commanding him to stop pleading; the decision had been made. Nevertheless, Yahweh granted His servant, who had in so many ways been faithful, the privilege of seeing the Promised Land even if he would not be permitted to enter it.

It seems clear that Moses felt it necessary to put chapter 4 in personal context by giving his own personal witness, thereby warning the children of Israel that disobedience to God's divine will, even simple carelessness, is costly. *Watch how you walk!* he says. Therefore, in that spirit, we turn to Deuteronomy 4:1-40, applying it as a starting point in our search for distinctives that will separate Israel from every other people.

A. Yahweh—The Creator of the Cosmos

As we look at this first distinctive that separates Israel from every other people, it will be helpful to get perspective. John Oswalt asks the question, *Is the Bible truly historical?* As he begins to

answer that question, he suggests that a mere mention of a concept in the literature of the ANE "does not mean that what they did with those ideas is identical to what Israel did with them." Going a step further, he says,

> Ultimately, this is where the difference lies. The Bible does not sometimes think of God as the sole Creator; it *always* thinks of him in that way. It never thinks of him in any other way. One can repeat this point on concept after concept; it is not that Israel is the only people who ever thought of an idea, it is that Israel is the first, and in most cases, the only culture to have carried that idea to its exclusive and logical conclusion.[223]

It is in that understanding that this study presents each of these distinctives.

As Moses nears the end of his warning in Deuteronomy 4, he makes reference to the creation in verse 32: "For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of." The reference is not a long exposition of the first chapters of Genesis, nor is it a systematic approach to a theology of biblical cosmology.[224] It is a simple reference to "the day God created man on the earth." But this simple fact is so engrained in the worldview of Israel that a simple reference is enough.

The Hebrew verb ברא (*barah*, "to create") occurs forty-eight times in the OT in both the simple active (Qal) and simple passive (Niphal) verbal stems.[225] In each of these instances, God is the one doing the creating. Not all of them refer to that first creative act in Genesis 1-2, as in Psalm

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[223] Oswalt, *Bible among the Myths*, 143-4.

[224] Cosmology is the study of the origin of the universe.

[225] Kohlenberger and Swanson, *HECOT*, 324-25; Kohlenberger and Swanson also list six additional references of ברא which are not related to the act of creation: once in 1 Sam. 22:29, the act of "fattening yourselves;" and five times where it means "to clear [the land]" (Josh. 17:15,18), "to make" [a signpost] (Ezek. 21:19, in BHS v. 24), and "to cut down" [with the sword] (Ezek. 23:47).

51:10, where David petitions God to create in him a clean heart—although even then, it is God doing the work of creation in David's heart.

Before delving further into what Israel and her forebears believed about the creation of the world, and in order to set the stage for what follows, several technical issues should be addressed relating to what Genesis 1:1-3 actually says, and what it means.

Modern translations of the Bible alternate between two renderings for verse one: (1) "In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the earth," and (2) "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth…" The difference seems to the lay reader a mere technicality, a matter of semantics. But the use of one or the other significantly alters the text's meaning, or at least what the theologian is able then to pronounce from the text.

Gordon Wenham lays out the implications of these two possible translations of the text.[226] It is clear that the second possibility above opens the door for the preexistence, perhaps even the *eternal* existence, of the unformed earth, which in turn allows the ruling out of creation *ex nihilo*, that is, *out of nothing*. Other creation accounts from the ANE begin with the presence of "the waters," and the gods in each account must in some way overcome and tame this eternal chaos. Therefore, how verse 1 is viewed allows or disallows this option; on the one hand, God can be seen as having to contend with the waters that were preexistent, or on the other, He created everything, including these waters, above which His Spirit is hovering in Genesis 1:2.

Oswalt suggests that this so-called "mythical outlook…is said to show that the Hebrews believed in preexistent chaos."[227] But chaotic is not the sense in which the Genesis account is recorded. Oswalt suggests that

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[226] Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC 1 (Dallas: Word, 1987), 11-14.

[227] Oswalt, *Bible among the Myths*, 99.

> Genesis 1 and 2 relate the story of creation of the cosmos in an atmosphere of complete serenity. That matter was originally "without form and void" (*tohu vabohu* Gen. 1:2) says absolutely nothing about any resistance on the part of animated chaotic matter or about God's overcoming of the forces of evil in order to make the world. Struggle is a part of creation; it is not a part of ultimate reality.[228]

The biblical record makes it clear that Israel believed that Yahweh was the creator of the entire cosmos, nothing excluded. The psalmist advises humanity to fear Yahweh, because of His act of creating,

> By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
> and by the breath of his mouth all their host.
> He gathered *the waters* of the sea as a heap;
> he puts *the deeps* in storehouses.
> Let all the earth fear the LORD;
> let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!
> For he spoke, and it came to be;
> he commanded, and it stood firm. (Ps. 33:6-9)

Peter Craigie, in commenting on this psalm, sees in the reference to *waters* and *the deeps* language that parallels "Canaanite and Mesopotamian cosmogonies involving conflict and the primeval waters," but suggesting that "God's creative acts, in his control of *waters* and *deeps*, evoke *fear* and *awe* from human beings…the overtones of the language in vv 4-9 indicate not only the divine creation of the natural order, but also the creation of God's holy nation in the redemption from Egypt accomplished at the Reed Sea."[229]

Hess contends that although creation out of nothing is not stated in the biblical text "in so many words…Genesis 1:1-3 is best understood in light of *creatio ex nihilo*."[230] Wenham, citing W. H. Schmidt in part, suggests that "though ברא does not denote *creatio ex nihilo*, it preserves the

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[228] Oswalt, *Bible among the Myths*, 67.

[229] Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, WBC 19 (Dallas: Word, 1983), 273.

[230] Richard S. Hess, *The Old Testament: A Historical, Theological, and Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 50.

same idea, namely, 'God's effortless, totally free and unbound creating, his sovereignty.'" Wenham himself, citing Psalm 148:5 and Proverbs 8:22-27, concludes that the implication is that God created "everything by his word."[231] Oswalt writes that creation "is not something that is merely a reshaping of what has always been. This is something that simply did not exist before God spoke it into being."[232]

The final point of clarification also comes from Wenham, who suggests that while "the heavens" (הַשָּׁמַיִם, *hashamayim*) by itself means "sky" or "heaven," and while "the earth" (הָאָרֶץ, *haarets*) by itself "means primarily the entire area in which man thinks of himself as living, as opposed to the regions of heaven or the underworld," the *combination* of the two speaks of the universe. He argues that verse 1, then, could be translated "In the beginning God created everything."[233]

Therefore, taking these points into consideration, these first three verses of the Bible are declaring that before there was anything else, the eternal, preexistent God created everything, that is, the cosmos (v. 1). In its initial state immediately after creation, it was uninhabited and desolate, a picture of chaos, although not a chaos from everything having broken down as we might see after a natural disaster, but chaos as in an opened box of parts that still need to be assembled; and over this formlessness and chaos, the Spirit of God is hovering (v. 2). Verse 2 is one of the most exciting verses in Scripture, with the Holy Spirit proclaiming all that is possible in the creation, saying in effect, *Imagine the things I can do with you!* Finally, once the plan is complete, God begins to

[231] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 14.

[232] Oswalt, *Bible among the Myths*, 69.

[233] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 15.

speak order and light and beauty into that which is, in its early stages of creation, chaotic and dark and empty (v. 3).

So what do the OT biblical writers have to say about God as Creator of the cosmos? Although we do not know the timing in his life, whether early or late, Moses prays, "Lord you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God" (Ps. 90:1-2). In fact, the Psalms are filled with short reminders that the LORD "made heaven and earth" (Pss. 124:8; 134:3), and the unnamed poet of Psalm 146 adds a phrase which will get carried into the NT age when he writes, "Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them."[234]

Isaiah is the most prolific in the use of ברא (*bara*) for a total of twenty-one times. The fact that Yahweh is Creator of the cosmos is never far from the prophet's mind. By the hand of the prophet, Yahweh asks the people in 40:18, "To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?" *An idol?* he asks in 40:19-20. Not likely! Then turning to the heavens, and then to princes and world rulers, He asks in 40:25-26, "To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing." Yahweh's concluding questions begin in verse 28: "Have you not known? Have you not heard? Yahweh is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth."

[234] Ps. 146:5-6. In Acts 4:24, after being released from their arrest for preaching the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, we find Peter and John praying, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them…"

Jeremiah a century or so later prayed, "Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you" (Jer. 32:17). Shortly thereafter, Nehemiah prays in 9:6, "You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you." Sometime after that,[235] Ethan the Ezrahite suggests in Psalm 89 that the heavens should praise the wonders of Yahweh, noting in verses 11 and 12, "the heavens are yours; the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it, you have founded them. The north and the south, you have created them; Tabor and Hermon joyously praise your name," and again in verse 47 a reminder that "you have created all the children of man."

It is clear that it was engrained in the heart and mind of Israel that Yahweh was the Creator of the cosmos, which is expressed in prayers and declarations and sermons. The simplicity of the declaration indicates how little needed to be said. But we must ask the question, how did this belief in Yahweh as the Creator of the cosmos distinguish Israel from the rest of the ancient world? According to Oswalt,

> The Old Testament's understanding of origins is very different from that found in the Near Eastern myths. In the myths conflict is essential to the creative process. Creation only emerged from the body of the Chaos Monster because victorious gods, with the slimmest of margins, defeated her. That is not the case in the Bible. Conflict may be a characteristic of the created cosmos, but that is not because conflict is a characteristic of reality. The world exists merely because God wants it to, not because of some cosmic struggle between the forces of order and the forces of disorder.[236]

[235] Since Ezra is a contemporary with Nehemiah, so when Ethan is identified as an Ezrahite, it is assumed that he lived and wrote "sometime after" both Ezra and Nehemiah.

[236] Oswalt, *Bible among the Myths*, 67.

When the world around Israel was in such conflict and disorder, and Israel was being dismissed as insignificant, or being persecuted, it would be this confidence that God was not merely some national or regional deity who may or may not have had some influence in the present situation, but Yahweh was the Creator of the cosmos, and as such had power to see them, to protect them, and to set them free according to His purposes. In fact, it seems that it is this sense of divine creation and sovereignty that has kept the children of Israel through all the many assaults they have faced, even into our own 20th century. There was always lurking in the background the reminder that, whatever Israel was experiencing—an army of horses and chariots pushing them toward the Red Sea, the giants of Canaan at the Conquest, exile at the hands of Assyria and Babylon, or more recently, the holocaust in World War II Europe—whatever the world and the enemy could dole out, God was the Creator of the cosmos who could handle *anything*!

But can this same understanding be traced into the patriarchal age? Are the patriarchs aware of *El Shaddai* as Creator of the cosmos? There is little direct reference during the patriarchal age, except for the occasion when Abram meets Melchizedek, who is described as "priest of God Most High" (Gen. 14:17-24). But this text speaks volumes.

Abram has just returned from rescuing Lot and his family, as well as the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, who had been taken captive by Chedorlaomer and his allies, as recorded earlier in Genesis 14. In verse 17, we are told that the king of Sodom went out to meet Abram, whose interest was primarily to get his people back; Abram could keep the possessions that he also rescued (v. 21). But before the king of Sodom can approach Abram, Israel's patriarch meets Melchizedek, who brings much-needed nourishment and a blessing: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" (Gen. 14:19-20).

The Hebrew noun קנה (*qoneh*, "possessor"), is also rendered *Creator*.[237] It comes from the Hebrew root קנה (*qanah*) which often carries the sense of *to get, acquire*,[238] or *to buy*.[239] But it also carries this sense of *originating* or *creating*, and appears in that light in Deuteronomy 32:6 and Psalm 139:13.[240]

In Genesis 14:19, Melchizedek identifies God Most High as "Possessor of heaven and earth," that is, Creator of heaven and earth. But the fact that Melchizedek knows this is not nearly as integral to our present study. What is of interest is that after Abram pays tithes to Melchizedek and finally meets the king of Sodom, who makes his offer to Abram, Abram responds,

> I have lifted my hand [that is, "I have taken a solemn oath"[241]] to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, "I have made Abram rich." I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share. (Gen. 14:22-24)

It is unclear from the text whether Abram already knew that God Most High is the Creator of the cosmos or whether this is new information. Since he does not react to this information as new, it appears to be part and parcel of that which is handed to him from his primeval roots. But even if that is not the case—and it is not possible to detect either possibility from the text itself—

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[237] H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1942), 465; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 317.

[238] Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 888.

[239] William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based on the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 320.

[240] BDB, 888.

[241] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 318.

Abram has now added that to his understanding and speaks that truth to the king of Sodom. There is no question, then, that he would carry this knowledge forward, passing it on directly to Isaac, and indirectly to Jacob and his sons, who will bear it in some fashion to the children of Israel in Egypt, and eventually to Moses.

Finally in our backward glance, we look to the saints in the primeval age. There is little textual evidence in that age, outside of the first two chapters of Genesis, of any human acknowledgment that God had created the cosmos. There are no recorded prayers, psalms, or sermons that would acknowledge God as Creator, and no divine revelations to man where God reveals that He is Creator—except two incidents in Genesis 2.

First, in verses 19-20, God brings "every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens" to Adam "to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field." While Adam had not yet been formed when God made the birds (which had been created on the fifth day), nor when God made the livestock and wild creatures (which had been created earlier on the sixth day), it would have been clear to him that this privilege of naming these created beings is given by the One who has authority to name—that is, the Creator.

But then, after a suitable helper cannot be found for Adam among the animals he has named, God puts him into a deep sleep, removes a rib from him, and made it into a woman, who is brought to Adam. In his exclamation of joy, Adam acknowledges that "she was taken out of Man" (Gen. 2:23). Whether it is post-surgical recovery (whatever that may have been) or a divine explanation, he knows that she did not exist before his deep sleep, but now she exists, created by God Himself.

B. Yahweh—The Unmatched Power in the Universe

As we move into this second distinctive that sets Israel and her forebears apart from the rest of the ancient world as a people with a monotheistic worldview, we return to Deuteronomy 4, which gives us two pictures to begin to process: divine power shown in both the Exodus and the Conquest of Canaan. Moses asks Israel to consider, "Has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?" (Deut. 4:34). The implied answer is *No!* But Moses is also making the point that for Yahweh to have delivered His people from the hands of the greatest world power in that part of the world at that time, there could be no power that could stand against His will.

A few verses later, he refers to both the Exodus (v. 37) and the Conquest of Canaan (v. 38). The description in the question relates to the Exodus, culminating in "great deeds of terror." When God first sent Moses to Pharaoh, the court magicians were able to copy the earliest plagues, but they soon got to a point where it was clear that they were up against a superior, unmatched power (Exod. 7:22; 8:7, 18).

Once God had chosen the Hebrew children as His people, bringing them out of slavery in Egypt, there would be no standing against them by any foreign power, large or small, whether it was the defeat of the Amalekites by Joshua (a victory by prayer and the uplifted hands of Moses, supported by Aaron and Hur; Exod. 17), or Gideon's 300 men standing against the Midianites, with 120,000 enemy soldiers fallen (Judg. 8:10), or Jehoshaphat's victory over Ammon, Moab, and the inhabitants of Mount Seir, where Israel sent out singers ahead of the army to sing praises to the Lord while the enemy, in divinely-induced confusion, turned on each other, leaving none

standing (2 Chron. 20). In every instance, the Bible makes it clear that God was able to overpower any enemy, and in turn, their gods, through whatever means He chose.

From 1 Samuel 1:3 onward, a common title for God would become יהוה צבאות (*yahweh tsevaot*, "LORD of hosts"), which Eugene Peterson renders "GOD of the Angel Armies" in his paraphrase, *The Message*.[242] While the Hebrew does not give a sense whether the armies in view are angelic or Israelite, it is clear that Yahweh Himself was (and is) Commander-in-Chief.

But it is His power over the forces of nature that is most incredible. Two incidents in the biblical text particularly display His unmatched power in this regard, because in these two incidents, Yahweh is manipulating the heavenly bodies. The first is recorded in Isaiah 38, where King Hezekiah is told, "Set your house in order, for you shall die, you shall not recover." But in answer to his plea for more time, God indicates that He has heard the king's prayer and will not only heal him but give him victory over the king of Assyria:

> "This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he has promised: Behold, I will make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the dial of Ahaz turn back ten steps." So the sun turned back on the dial the ten steps by which it had declined. (Isa. 38:7-8)

For the sun to turn back these ten steps, which equates to approximately one hour, the earth's rotation would have to come to a complete stop, reverse itself these ten degrees, and then restart its rotation. The results of such an impossible action would be disastrous upon the earth, sending living and inanimate matter flying in all directions; but in the hands of this unmatched power, the only result was a confirmation of a divine promise, with all of creation untouched!

The second example of Yahweh's unmatched power over heavenly bodies is found in Joshua 10, where Joshua was defeating the Amorites, who began to run to escape Israel. Verse 11

[242] Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 347.

says that "the LORD threw down large stones from heaven on [the Amorites]…and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword." But the biblical account does not stop there. In the midst of the hailstorm and the vigorous pursuit, Joshua cried out,

> "Sun, stand still in Gibeon,
> and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon."
> And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,
> until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. (Josh. 10:12)

The text concludes, "The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel" (Josh. 10:12-14). He who had created everything also had unmatched power over everything!

Nahum Sarna strongly suggests that the Bible "tells us something about the nature of the one God who is the Creator and supreme sovereign of the world and whose will is absolute. It asserts that God is outside the realm of nature, which is wholly subservient to Him."[243] He continues,

> Genesis is but a prologue to the historical drama that unfolds itself in the ensuing pages of the Bible. It proclaims, loudly and unambiguously, the absolute subordination of all creation to the supreme Creator who thus can make use of the forces of nature to fulfill His mighty deeds in history. It asserts unequivocally that the basic truth of all history is that the world is under the undivided and inescapable sovereignty of God.[244]

Throughout Israel's history, from the Exodus until the final prophecies of the OT, the Bible represents Yahweh as the unmatched power over nations, over nature, and over eternity. Although often unfaithful to His divine will, and therefore paying the price for disobedience and divine

[243] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 3.

[244] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 9.

judgment, Israel nevertheless did not question the fact that God was sovereign over all. But our study requires that we look to the patriarchal age to examine whether this same confidence can be found among the patriarchs.

There are two incidents that happen back to back that are only peripherally connected that speak of God's unmatched power. The first comes in Genesis 18 when three men visit Abraham. After a gracious meal is provided, the LORD confirms to Abraham what he had been promised in 17:16—that Sarah herself would bear Abraham a son. But now, as Sarah hears the news from the doorway, she laughs to herself at the thought, as Abraham had laughed in 17:17. What brings this text to our discussion is God's answer to the aged couple: "Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son" (Gen 18:14). By His own declaration to them, God has indicated that what is impossible in the natural realm is not hard for His unmatched power.

As the narrative unfolds, it is clear that the three visitors have come in response to the outcry against the sins being committed in Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:16-21, esp. v. 20). Piecing together the narrative, one of the visitors is Yahweh Himself, who decides to engage Abraham in dialogue about His plans to destroy Sodom; the other two are angels who are sent, not to destroy the city but to warn and rescue Lot for Abraham's sake (Gen. 19:15-17, 24).

We see the unmatched power of God as He pours out judgment for what He has seen in these wicked cities. The text indicates that shortly after sunrise "the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground" (Gen. 19:24-25). The Hebrew word for sulfur (גפרית, *gafrit*) occurs six more times in the OT, each as a response to divine

anger at wickedness.[245] The corresponding Greek word in the NT, θεῖον (*theion*, "brimstone, sulfur"), occurs in Luke 17:29 as a reference back to the destruction at Sodom and Gomorrah; in Revelation 9:17-18 describing the judgment that comes from the four angels that are released in the sixth trumpet judgment upon the earth; in Revelation 14:10 describing the judgment that will come upon those receiving the mark of the beast; and finally in Revelation 19:20, 20:10, and 21:8, describing God's final judgment in the lake of fire.

Here in Genesis 19:24-25, we see the wrath of God poured out in response to an outcry against wickedness. As Abraham watched the burning from a distance (vv. 27-28), it would be clear to him that the God with whom he has been in dialogue, the One who has been longsuffering at the wickedness in Sodom and Gomorrah until even *that* was exceeded, finally requiring judgment, is the unmatched power of the universe. Nothing has escaped God's notice, nor has divine patience held back judgment forever. Abraham sees it all from a distance.

Then as we move back into the primeval age, there are two specific incidents where God will display His unmatched power over His creation. The first is implied in the text of Genesis 3, but the second is far more obvious.

As God stands in the garden, He asks Adam if he has "eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat," and Adam blames the woman (vv. 11-12). Turning to her, God asks, "What is this that you have done?" and the woman blames the serpent, who has deceived her (v. 13). Finally God turns to the serpent and asks nothing, but simply doles out judgment. Adam immediately sees the serpent that he had named in 2:19 move from an upright position to a crawling position, never to rise again. Although Adam is soon provided clothing by God's mercy,

[245] Deut. 29:23; Job 18:15; Ps. 11:6; Isa. 30:33; 34:9; Ezek. 38:22.

he will forever see the judgment upon himself and creation, including the changed form of the serpent, and know that God has power to create and to transform that which He creates.

But the deepest sense of God's unmatched power in the universe surfaces in the flood account. The biblical record indicates in Genesis 6:13 that God spoke to Noah regarding the violence that was rampant upon the earth, and His determination "to make an end of all flesh," concluding, "Behold, I will destroy them with the earth." But as the conversation continues, it is also clear in 6:18 that God has made gracious provision to enter into covenant with Noah.

Throughout the ensuing chapters as this narrative unfolds, Noah will discover that God is not only *Creator*, Preserver, and Governor of all things, but also has the power to be the *Destroyer* of all things. During the days leading up to the flood, there is no attempt to stay the hand of God, and as the surviving eight disembark from the ark more than a year later, they are keenly aware of God's unmatched power to create, to destroy, and to re-create.

C. Yahweh—The Final Authority in Morality

As we turn to this next distinctive that would set Israel apart from every other people on earth, we return to Moses' warning in Deuteronomy 4, in which he concludes, "Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time" (Deut. 4:40). Moses throughout this chapter has spoken about morality in terms that would set them apart from their ANE neighbors, including a long section on the sin of idolatry.

In this final verse of the warning, as Moses reminds them about the commandments that Yahweh gave through His servant, it is interesting that there is a difference in the possible outcome

of their entry into the land. Obedience to the statutes and commandments of God will open the door "that it may go well with you and with your children after you." But notice the tension at the end of the verse: "that you may prolong your days in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time." If the land has been promised to them "for all time," how can it then be prolonged by obedience and submission?

To help us understand this seeming discrepancy, we turn to the same concept that arises hundreds of years later as Ethan the Ezrahite writes Psalm 89 and an unknown psalmist writes Psalm 132, one of the final Songs of Ascent for the pilgrimage back into Jerusalem. Ethan says that Yahweh has entered into a covenant with David: "I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens" (Ps. 89:29). But notice the warning in the verses that follow:

> If his children forsake my law
> And do not walk according to my rules,
> If they violate my statutes
> And do not keep my commandments,
> Then I will punish their transgression with the rod
> And their iniquity with stripes,
> But I will not remove from him [that is, David] my steadfast love
> Or be false to my faithfulness.
> I will not violate my covenant
> Or alter the word that went forth from my lips.
> Once for all I have sworn by my holiness;
> I will not lie to David.
> His offspring shall endure forever,
> His throne as long as the sun before me. (Ps. 89:30-36)

The unknown psalmist makes the same point, but offers a positive outcome:

> The LORD swore to David a sure oath
> From which he will not turn back:
> One of the sons of your body
> I will set on your throne.
> If your sons keep my covenant
> And my testimonies that I shall teach them,
> Their sons also forever
> Shall sit on your throne. (Ps. 132:11-12)

There is in these two psalms a promise that will never be broken, but also an option for those who receive the promise. In this case, while there may be other intervening fulfillments, there is an ultimate understanding that it is Christ Himself who will be "the son of David" (Matt. 1:1), and that in Him the promise is fulfilled: "the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David" (Luke 1:32). But the immediate word from both psalmists is that God will indeed fulfill His promise, whether the intervening generations choose to participate by obedience or not participate by disobedience.

The same conditions apply to the children of Israel as they stand again at the edge of the Promised Land—God has given them the land for all time, but how each generation will respond to the requirements that He Himself will establish is up to them. While God was true to His Word, the generation that died in the wilderness would not experience it its fulfillment for them. In the end, Yahweh alone is the final authority in morality.

As we trace the outworking of this into Israel's experience in the land, God draws a sharp line between how the previous inhabitants had lived and what He expected of His own people. He forbade human sacrifice (2 Chron. 28:1-3), cult sexuality (1 Kgs. 14:24), the occult (2 Chron. 33:1-2, 6), and idolatry (2 Chron. 33:1-3). Yet in the end, it was this disobedience that would cost them God's protection against Assyria and against Babylon (2 Chron. 33:7b-11). God's protection was clearly tied to the morality of Israel (and of the nations).

But it was not just in forbidding these practices, many of which were tied to religious practice. Throughout their experience, God continued to require care and compassion for the poor and disadvantaged, honesty in business and in the courts, respect and care for parents, and fidelity to one's spouse. The Levitical laws bear this out.

As we look back into the patriarchal age, we fail to see all the morality that we would hope to find. Abraham twice lied to a foreign king about his full relationship with Sarah. The first of these incidents was to the ungodly Pharaoh in Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20), which is bad enough. But the second is unconscionable as Abraham lies to Abimelech, king of Gerar, a God-fearing king (Gen. 20:1-18). Arnold notes that Abimelech asks Abraham three questions, the first two of which are rhetorical: "What have you done to us [the people of Gerar]? How have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin?" (v. 9). Abraham has no answer. But the final question must be answered: "What did you see, that you did this thing?" (v. 10). Arnold suggests that with the first two questions, Abimelech likely has the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in mind, and fears his own destruction and that of his people. But of the third question, Arnold sees a possible connection between the verb *see* and Abraham's identification as a prophet/seer. Abraham is humbled by the answer he must give: "There is no fear of God at all in this place" (v. 11). Abraham had assumed the worst of the king and his people. Arnold suggests, "Those assumptions, he must now admit, were unfair and inaccurate, especially so in light of the fact that God has revealed the truth about Sarah to King Abimelech in a dream and the good king has chosen to act appropriately."[246]

Isaac repeated the sin of his father, also lying to Abimelech, king of the Philistines (Gen 26:6-11). It would seem that neither of these patriarchs fully felt the weight of their actions since in each case God protected them and their wives.

But we must also balance these and other immoral choices with Abraham's witness of the judgment against Sodom and Gomorrah. As Abraham witnesses God's actions against the inhabitants in these twin cities of destruction, it is clear that God has set a standard for moral

[246] Arnold, *Genesis*, 190-91.

behavior. For later Israel that standard would be centered around the Decalogue, but for earlier generations, there was a law written on the hearts of humanity by which God would determine righteousness. This law of God was not up for discussion, as we saw in the expulsion of the Canaanites from their land. God alone would set that standard.

In the final chapters of Genesis as we conclude the patriarchal age, we find that Jacob gives his blessing to his sons according to their behavior, with firstborn Reuben losing the preeminence of that birth position because of his disrespect and sexual sin (Gen. 49:3-4), and Simeon and Levi would be scattered among the tribes because of their violent acts (Gen. 49:5-7). The moral standard would determine the inheritance and the blessing.

Moving further back from the patriarchal age, the point is a fairly easy one to make for the primeval fathers. The sin of Adam and Eve in disobeying a single command resulted in their judgment (Gen. 3:16-19) and banishment from the Garden (Gen. 3:22-24). From the very beginning God would make it clear that His word of command would not be ignored without consequence.

But the height of immorality is seen in Genesis 6, where we have a turning point in the divine-human relationship:

> The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them." (Gen. 6:5-7)

The *Creator* of all things became the *Destroyer* of all things. The message for all humanity for all time was now set. God was and is the final authority in morality, and disobedience would be judged without question or recourse. God's word of judgment would be final.

D. Yahweh—Demanding Exclusivity in Allegiance and Worship

As we turn to this final distinctive that would set Israel apart from every other people on earth, we come to that which *most* would distinguish them—Yahweh's demand for exclusivity in both worship and allegiance. As we uncover this aspect of their experience, we will take the same route as we have taken previously in discussing the first three distinctives, looking first at our foundational text in Deuteronomy 4, moving from there into Israel's experience as a people and a nation, and then moving back into both the patriarchal and primeval ages.

In the final nine verses of his warning in Deuteronomy 4, Moses touches on each of the distinctives that we have laid out (Deut. 4:32-40). But twice in that passage he indicates that Yahweh is requiring exclusivity. First in verse 35, he declares that the reason Yahweh took them from Egypt "by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror" was that Israel "might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him." The Exodus was the demonstration of His demand for exclusivity. In verse 39, Moses again makes the point, warning the people, "know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other."

Shortly before his death, Joshua gathers the people of Israel at Shechem and renews the divine covenant between them and Yahweh. As we approach this final chapter of the book of Joshua, we find first that he rehearses their history (Josh. 24:2-13), and then brings a challenge that will call for a decision on the part of the nation (Josh. 24:14-15).

In rehearsing that history, however, Joshua makes two references that, taken at face value, appear to set our study on uneven and questionable ground. This godly leader takes them all the way back to Terah in Ur of the Chaldeans, and indicates in Joshua 24:2 that "long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other

gods." As he moves into the challenge phase of this chapter, he begins by saying, "now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD" (Josh. 24:14).

As we saw in chapter one, Mark Smith is convinced that "it has become clear that Israel knew some sort of polytheism."[247] Setting aside the practice of Terah and his kin for the moment, we look at Israel's sojourn in Egypt, and must acknowledge that we know almost nothing of their cultural or cultic experience during that period. By God's design, they are granted settlement in Goshen, separated from the Egyptians because they are shepherds (Gen. 47:6). This possibility would give them some shielding from Egyptian culture, but to what extent is not clear. But what *is* clear is that when God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush, He insisted that He alone would be God over the people Israel.[248] Whatever their cultural or cultic experience prior to that, God was revealing Himself to Moses and to the people as the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He would expect exclusivity in both allegiance and worship.

As we opened this second chapter, there was an acknowledgment that Israel struggled with idolatry throughout her experience. But that idolatry is not to be unquestionably equated with polytheism, where Yahweh is in competition with gods and cosmic forces. His unmatched power in the universe has already settled that. What we see is a nation that is struggling with God's intangibility, that God can only be seen by His actions, and that His presence is only known by faith. Israel's tendency is to look for the tangible. They wanted something they could see and touch.

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[247] Smith, *Origins*, 4-6.

[248] See Exod. 3:10, where God says "come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring *my people*, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

As Smith defines monotheism, he suggests that "most interpreters include two kinds of expressions in clearly monistic claims. The first involves a claim of exclusivity that proclaims Yahweh 'alone'…The second involves statements claiming that all other deities are 'not,' 'nothings,' or 'dead.'"[249] But after citing the various biblical passages where both of these kinds of expressions are clearly evident, Smith thinks that examples of the first only appear as "the rhetoric of praise"—that is, in prayers—and those of the second only appear as "the rhetoric of persuasion," and as such must be excluded from the discussion.[250] Examples from Isaiah 45 are representative of the witness found throughout the OT, which Smith rejects on these grounds:

> I am the LORD, and there is no other,
> Besides me there is no God…
> That people may know, from the rising of the sun
> And from the west, that there is none besides me;
> I am the LORD, and there is no other.
> I form light and create darkness,
> I make well-being and create calamity,
> I am the LORD, who does all these things. (Isa. 45:5-7)
>
> Thus says the LORD,
> The Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him [that is, Cyrus]:
> Ask me of things to come;
> Will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?
> I made the earth
> And created man on it;
> It was my hands that stretched out the heavens,
> And I commanded all their host. (Isa. 45:11-12)

It is clear from this "rhetoric" that Israel throughout her experience, despite the tendency toward the tactile and the tangible in idolatry, is aware that Yahweh alone is God. In fact, a few

[249] Smith, *Origins*, 151; the transliterations for 'not,' 'nothings,' and 'dead' have been left out of this citation of Smith.

[250] Smith, *Origins*, 152.

verses after the Shema,[251] Moses makes it clear that Yahweh is a jealous God and will share His glory with no other:

> It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you—for the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth. (Deut. 6:13-15)

Now as we move back to the beginning of the patriarchal age, we must look at Terah and those around him. As has already been alluded to in the first chapter of this paper, the text of the first eleven chapters of Genesis indicate that God has provided a clear witness from Adam to Abraham. And in due course, we will look at that text and the linguistic markers that are there. But understand that a clear line of witness from Adam to Abraham does not mean that every link between the two is participant in that line of witness, but that there are some who come in contact with that line of witness but are not included within it. Terah is such an example.

Joshua is clear that Terah and his people worship other gods. Just how involved Abram has been in that cultural and cultic experience prior to his call in Genesis 12 is not clear. What *is* clear, however, is God's call to Abraham: "Go from your country [that is, Mesopotamia] and your kindred [that is, the larger family unit of which Terah is a final point of contact for Abraham] and your father's house [that is, Terah's direct influence] to the land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). Whatever Abraham in earlier years had known, God was calling him apart for Himself in order to hand him the possibility of participation in this line of witness.

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[251] The Shema, found in Deut. 6:4, and takes its name from the first word שמע (*shema*, "Hear"): "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." The ESV footnote indicates that other possible translations of this verse are "the LORD our God is one LORD," or "the LORD our God, the LORD is one," or "the LORD is our God, the LORD alone." Smith questions whether the Shema is a representative of a monotheistic text in the Bible "due to later readings of the verse"; Smith, *Origins*, 153.

John Walton, in an excursus on Abraham's religion,[252] seems to waver between Abraham being and not being a monotheist:

> It is clear, then, that the biblical record does not attribute monotheism of any sort to the family of Abraham. In addition, we would search in vain for any passage in which Abraham or any of the patriarchs denies the existence of other gods. Nevertheless, the perspective of the biblical text is that all of the worship of Abraham that is recorded is focused on a single deity, though that deity is called by differing names. The Bible, however, nowhere explicitly insists that this is the only God that Abraham ever worshiped. It can be safely inferred from the biblical data that Abraham showed a distinct preferential loyalty for a single god.[253]

As Abraham and his heirs move through the remainder of the patriarchal age, it is true that we find little evidence that God was their exclusive focus. But it is also true that we do not find them worshiping any other, and all their recorded interactions are with God alone.

Finally as we move back into the primeval age, again there is little that would immediately point to monotheism, primarily because until the Tower of Babel in chapter 11, there is no reference to any other god who is worshiped by anyone. Even the wickedness leading up to the flood does not appear to be an issue of either paganism or idolatry. It is simply violence in the human realm, and extreme willfulness in the intersection between the human and demonic realms.[254]

However, after the flood, God enters into a covenant "between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations" (Gen. 9:12). This was not a general agreement between general parties on either side, but between God and His creation—or in this case, His re-creation after the flood.

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[252] Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 112-14.

[253] Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 112.

[254] A reading of Gen. 6:1-4 invites an understanding of this intersection.

The first thing that Noah did upon leaving the ark was to build an altar to Yahweh, offering "some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird" (Gen. 8:20). This represents what would become in later Israel a thank offering for God's great mercy and faithfulness. There must have been moments during the 375 days on the ark[255] that Noah and his family grew weary and felt this ordeal would never end. In fact, the verb that is used in Genesis 7:18-20, 24 to describe the waters of the flood is גבר (*gavar*; in the Qal, "to be strong and mighty, to prevail"[256]). In verse 20 this verb speaks of the height to which the waters rose, rising more than twenty feet above the mountains, and in verse 24, it speaks of the duration of the flood waters upon the earth, 150 days in all before God acted on their behalf and the waters began to subside. Is it any wonder that they were grateful to be on dry and solid ground again?

Yahweh's response upon smelling the pleasing aroma was to make an internal decision. The text indicates that "Yahweh said in his heart, 'I will never again *curse the ground because of man*, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains,[257] seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease'" (Gen. 8:21-22). But in this text, there are two things to note. First, it would appear that God's disappointment and anger at the rampant wickedness and violence on the earth before the flood, and his sorrow of heart at having created

[255] According to Gen. 7:11, it was on the seventeenth day of the second month that Noah and his family entered the ark, and God shut them in (v. 16), and according to Gen. 8:14, it was on the twenty seventh day of the second month that the earth had dried out and they were given clearance to leave the ark—that is, a full year and ten days spent on the ark.

[256] BDB, 149; Holladay, *HALOT*, 54.

[257] Note that this conditional phrase is what does not bind God against a final judgment upon humanity as we see in 2 Pet. 3:10, the book of Revelation, and countless other texts throughout the Old and New Testaments; what *is* binding upon God in this covenant is that the final judgment(s) will not come by way of a universal flood.

humanity (Gen. 6:5-6) is not contradicted in this text; here, God is sorry that the rest of creation has had to pay a price for human sin. Second, notice that while God indicated this sorrow of heart to Noah and his sons in 9:11 as He enters into covenant with them (and with all creation), the sorrow itself and the decision to make a covenant with creation began in the divine heart, and was only then revealed verbally to Noah and his sons. For Noah, there would be no other deity. God, the Creator, Destroyer, and now Re-Creator of all things, would alone be his God.

IV. Conclusion: Walking with Yahweh in Relationship

What ties each of these distinctives together is the possibility of tactile and tangible relationship with the Creator and Unmatched Power of the universe, who Himself is anything but tactile and tangible. But what is most noticeable in this relational aspect, which will play a large role in our moving forward, is that God not only expects his people to be both available and vulnerable before Him, but He Himself is willing to model this availability and vulnerability before them.

We can see this availability and vulnerability on the part of Yahweh in Exodus 33, where God initially says that He will send an angel with them from Sinai to Kadesh Barnea, but He Himself will not go, "lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people" (v. 3). But later, beginning with verse 12, Moses argues that Yahweh has said he (Moses) has found favor in His sight, and that He must be the One to accompany their journey. Yahweh agrees, and promises to go with them. Further, when Moses asks to see God's glory (that is, His very being), God says that he cannot see the face of God and live; yet God is willing to allow Moses to see Him as He passes by, carefully covering Moses' face for protection until He is safely beyond him.

Nowhere in the ancient world among the so-called pantheon of gods is there any such display of divine-human relationship. In fact, while the so-called gods of the ANE are portrayed

as vulnerable in many ways, that is never by intent, nor is it seen as desirable for their wellbeing and power.[258] But Yahweh is so comfortable with His own power and authority, His own transcendent being, that imminence and accommodation pose no threat to His wellbeing.[259]

As Moses is bringing to a close his warning in Deuteronomy 4, he alludes three times to this relational possibility. In verse 33, he asks, "Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and still live?" In verse 36, the question becomes a declaration when he affirms, "Out of heaven he let you hear his voice, that he might discipline you. And on earth he let you see his great fire, and you heard his words out of the midst of the fire."

But verses 37-39 tie the patriarchal age with the Exodus. Moses declares, "because he loved your fathers and chose their offspring after them and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence…know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other."

This relationship will be seen throughout Israel's rocky history as God would claim Israel as His very own possession. On the day that the children of Israel came to the wilderness of Sinai, only two months after leaving Egypt, Yahweh said to Moses,

> Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles'

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[258] John N. Oswalt, *Called to Be Holy: A Biblical Perspective* (Anderson, IN: Francis Asbury Press, 1999), 11.

[259] We see this same spirit of humility in our Savior as the fourth evangelist declares that "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him" (John 13:3-5). His own self-knowledge did not push Him toward pride, but allowed Him to humbly and comfortably care for His disciples—even the ones who would soon betray Him and deny Him. In this we clearly see the character of Yahweh in its finest display of grace and graciousness.

> wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." (Exod. 19:3-6)

These words would remain with them throughout their history, and become part of the apostolic inheritance for the Church:

> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Pet. 2:9-10)

Eugene Peterson, in his introduction to *The Message*, speaks of this relationship in these terms:

> Yet another surprise is that the Bible does not flatter us. It is not trying to sell us anything that promises to make life easier. It doesn't offer secrets to what we often think of as prosperity or pleasure or high adventure. The reality that comes into focus as we read the Bible has to do with what God is doing in a saving love that includes us and everything we do. This is quite different from what our sin-stunted and culture-cluttered minds imagined. But our Bible reading does not give us access to a mail-order catalog of idols from which we can pick and choose to satisfy our fantasies. The Bible begins with God speaking creation and us into being. It continues with God entering into personalized and complex relationships with us, helping and blessing us, teaching and training us, correcting and disciplining us, loving and saving us. This is not an escape from reality but a plunge into more reality—a sacrificial but altogether better life all the way.[260]

No other nation would know this kind of invitation by its deity, nor would this invitation, initially at least, be extended to any other nation. But God would set His heart on humanity, and as a plan to reach all people, He chose a single people to whom He would show His great mercy and display His unmatched power through personal relationship. Israel would forever hold a special place in God's heart, and He would forever stand alone as the living God.

[260] Peterson, *Message*, 11.

Chapter Three – The Biblical Use of הלך (*Halak*, "To Walk")

I. Introduction: Verbal Structures in the Old Testament

In chapter two, we established those beliefs which serve as distinctives of biblical monotheism, that is, that Yahweh is seen as the Creator of the Cosmos, the Unmatched Power in the Universe, the Final Authority in Morality, and Demanding Exclusivity in Allegiance and Worship. We also began a discussion about Yahweh's choice to enter covenant relationship with Israel. We now will consider the language of the OT in which that relationship is couched.

At the beginning of his *Elements of Old Testament Theology,* Claus Westermann asks what the OT says about God, implying that this question is at the heart of any OT theology. But an OT theology that fully answers the question, he posits, must first understand the nature of how the OT portrays itself—it tells a story. He suggests, then, that the structure for such a theology "must be based on events rather than concepts."[261] But it is Westermann's conclusion that most interests our present study—that an OT theology must be in the language of the OT itself. He observes that the language of the OT "is overwhelmingly dominated by verbs," and therefore contends that "if we wish to inquire concerning these broad lines determining the whole way in which the Old Testament speaks about God and yet not overlook the many forms in which it occurs, we shall therefore have to start from *verb structures*."[262]

Although this present study is not attempting to establish another OT theology, these guidelines influence our approach. Our present attention is on the language that is presented in the biblical text. If indeed Westermann is correct when he says that the language of the OT "is

[261] Westermann, *Elements of OT Theology,* 9.

[262] Westermann, *Elements of OT Theology,* 10; italics original.

overwhelmingly dominated by verbs," then our attention to הלך (*halak*, "to walk") is an appropriate starting point.

What we will see in this chapter is that הלך (*halak*, "to walk") goes well beyond the literal; it is a common metaphor for "the act or process of living."[263] Through a study of התהלך (*hithallek*), the Hithpael verbal stem of הלך, along with the Greek verbs employed to represent it in the Septuagint, we will see that in all of its complexity, it speaks of *intentionality* in each of its sixty-four occurrences in the OT. Finally, through a study of the eight occurrences of this Hithpael stem in Genesis—which represents Yahweh's dealings with humanity during the primeval and patriarchal ages—we will argue that this divine-human relationship points to biblical monotheism from the very beginning.

II. Understanding הלך (*Halak*, "To Walk")

In its most literal sense, הלך (*halak*) means to "go, come, walk," and is the opposite of sitting (ישׁב, *yashab*), as in "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you *sit* in your house, or when you walk (הלך, *halak*) by the way…" (Deut. 6:7); and distinguished from running (רוץ, *ruts*), as in "when you walk (הלך, *halak*), your step will not be hampered, and if you *run*, you will not stumble" (Prov. 4:12); and also distinguished from riding or driving (רכב, *rakav*), as in "Tell of it, you who *ride* on white donkeys, you who sit on rich carpets and you who *walk* (הלך, *halak*) by the way" (Judg. 5:10).[264]

Koehler and Baumgartner further clarify its literal use when applied to things other than human persons: serpents *creep* (Gen. 3:14), the sea *flows* (Jonah 1:11), water *runs* (1 Kgs. 18:35),

[263] Eugene H. Merrill, "הלך (*hlk*)," *NIDOTTE* 1:1032.

[264] BDB, 230.

fire *rushes down* (Exod. 9:23), ships *float* (Gen. 7:18), and letters *are sent* (Neh. 6:17).[265] Each of these verses represent the use of הלך (*halak*).

The application of the literal meaning, this movement from one geographical point to another, is shown in Genesis 12:4a, "so Abram *went* (הלך, *halak*), as the LORD had told him, and Lot *went* (הלך, *halak*) with him," leaving Ur of the Chaldeans and heading toward Canaan. The literal meaning is also seen in Genesis 9:23, "Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and *walked* (הלך, *halak*) backward and covered the nakedness of their father." Although the movement is in a reverse direction—clearly an odd way to walk—this speaks nothing more than geographical movement. Finally, we see the literal meaning in Genesis 3:14, where the LORD God said to the serpent in judgment, "because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you *shall go* (הלך, *halak*), and dust you shall eat all the days of your life." While the bigger picture of judgment in Eden shows a permanent change to a created species, the verb speaks about the manner in which the serpent will forever be able to move geographically from one place to another. Each of these uses of הלך (*halak*) refers to literal geographical movement.

But moving into the figurative, Merrill suggests that "just as *derek* ('way') is the most common nom. in the OT to use as a metaphor for life, so *hlk* is the vb. most frequently employed to describe the act or process of living." Of the more than 1,500 appearances of the verb הלך (*halak*) in the OT, several hundred refer to a "figurative rather than literal meaning," describing "men and women living out their days in general or in obedience to the divine principles designed to govern

[265] Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, "הלך," *HALOT* 1:246.

their lives on earth."[266] This figurative meaning, then, can refer to *mundane* pursuit as well as the *sacred*.

In the application of the figurative meaning, we find the verb takes on different shades of meaning. For instance, Proverbs 20:19a says, "Whoever *goes about* (הלך, *halak*) slandering reveals secrets." Reyburn and Fry suggest, "this is a straightforward observation about human behavior," noting that it is nearly identical with the phrase in the first half of Proverbs 11:13. They further suggest that it speaks about one "who makes a habit of spreading tales and rumors about others."[267] As Crawford Toy comments on the phrase, "the Heb. expression describes the talebearer as one who goes about spreading malicious gossip—lit. *a walker of slander*."[268] In this case, the walking is certainly not geographical movement, but behavior. It is also helpful to notice that the context does not suggest behavior in terms of an act, an isolated incident, but a habit that has developed.

A second example of this figurative meaning can be seen in Jeremiah 25:6, which reads, "Do not *go after* (הלך, *halak*) other gods to serve and worship them." While this phrase also speaks of habitual action, as opposed to a single incident, the action is not so much behavior as allegiance, even cultic devotion.

In addition to these individual texts that employ the figurative use of הלך (*halak*), we find an established pattern in the passing of the scepter from generation to generation in the divided

[266] Merrill, "הלך (*hlk*)," 1032-33.

[267] William David Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Proverbs*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 427.

[268] Crawford Howell Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1899), 227.

monarchy of Israel and Judah. This pattern, although not perfectly adhered to, at least speaks of the figurative covering a much larger textual and theological landscape.

As we turn first to the northern kingdom of Israel, the nation that Yahweh carved out from the house of David, we find ten tribes that are given to Jeroboam, a servant in Solomon's court. He had no royal blood and no claim to the throne. But Solomon had chosen idolatry (1 Kgs. 11:31-33) instead of faithfulness, and Jeroboam, his servant, had proven himself "very able" and "industrious" (1 Kgs. 11:28). By the mouth of the prophet Ahijah, Jeroboam was given a great opportunity. God said to him, "if you will listen to all that I command you, and *will walk* (הלך, *halak*) in my ways, and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you" (1 Kgs. 11:38). But the condition was clear: *If you will walk in my ways.* Yet once he was crowned, Jeroboam feared that if he allowed his people in the north to travel to Jerusalem to worship at the temple, as God had required, they would defect to the southern kingdom of Judah and he would lose his kingdom. We are told in 1 Kings 12:25-33 that out of fear he established his own places of worship, his own non-Levitical priesthood,[269] and his own feast days "that he had devised from his own heart" (v. 33). Simon DeVries calls these actions "religious innovations," but indicates that the biblical writer portrays such innovation as error.[270]

What is unfortunate is that Jeroboam's fear and insecurity were unfounded. God had taken the vast majority of the kingdom from Solomon and his son Rehoboam, and given it to Jeroboam with the promise of a new royal line issuing from him—a line that would likely equal what God

[269] Raymond Dillard indicates that Jeroboam's choosing of his own priesthood came after turning away those Levitical priests who were willing to serve; cf. Raymond B. Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, WBC 15 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 97.

[270] Simon J. DeVries, *1 Kings*, WBC 12 (Waco, TX: Word), 163.

had built for David.[271] But fear and insecurity[272] destroyed any hopes of longevity in that line, and *set the standard* for all that would happen in the next two-hundred years.

We notice that each ascendent to the throne is measured in comparison with the king immediately before him (see Appendix 1), but also measured against the standard set by Jeroboam, a standard for disobedience. For Nadab, Jeroboam's son, the text tells us that "he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and *walked* (הלך, *halak*) in the way of his father, and in his sin which he made Israel to sin" (1 Kgs. 15:26). The pattern continues until Israel is taken into exile to Assyria in 722 BC.

As we turn to the kings of Judah, we find that the pattern is the same (see Appendix 2). Rehoboam ascends the throne of his father Solomon and immediately the people approach him and ask for relief from the heavy burden that Solomon had placed on them, both a burden of taxation and of forced labor. Rehoboam takes council with the elders, who suggest kindness and a lifting of the burden, "then they will be your servants forever" (1 Kgs. 12:7). But Rehoboam seeks a second opinion from his contemporaries, who suggest a much harder line. In his foolishness, he abandons the counsel of the elders and replies to the people, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions" (1 Kgs. 12:14).

David had already set the standard by which every king in Judah would be judged. While David would have already set the standard for the northern kingdom of Israel as well, since both

[271] It appears that Yahweh's plans to build Jeroboam an equal house with David can be seen in 1 Kgs. 11:38, where He promises Jeroboam that if he obeys "as David my servant did," He would build him "a sure house, as I built for David." There appears to be no distinction intended.

[272] Jeroboam's fear and insecurity can be seen in 1 Kgs. 12:26-27, where Jeroboam, "in his heart," speaks about the people returning to the house of David and about his own safety.

north and south came from the same united monarchy, the sin of both Solomon and Rehoboam interrupted that pattern and Yahweh took ten tribes *from* David and gave them to Jeroboam, who then set his own standard. Thus, in northern Israel, there are only a few references back to David.

In the passing of power from generation to generation in Israel, there are six kings at the end of the line for whom the text says that he "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD" instead of employing הלך (*halak*).[273] In Judah, there are six kings early in the line for whom the text says that he "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD,"[274] and six kings at the end of the line for whom the text says that he "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD."[275] Both of these phrases convey the same message as הלך (*halak*).

Therefore, in both Israel and Judah, "walking in the ways of" their fathers, whether in obedience to God or in rebellion against Him, was clearly more than the literal, geographical movement. Nor was it an occasional action or a peripheral habit that the biblical writers are portraying figuratively. The text is speaking of a *lifestyle* that resembles (or in several cases, rejects) the standard that has been set by one's predecessor.

[273] The six kings are Jeroboam II, Zechariah, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea.

[274] The six kings of Judah are Asa, Joash (Jehoash), Amaziah, Azariah (Uzziah), Jotham, and Hezekiah.

[275] The six kings of Judah are Manasseh, Amon, Jehoahaz, Johoikim (Eliakim), Johoichin , and Zedekiah.

III. Understanding התהלך (*Hithallek*, "To Walk Intentionally")

Bruce Waltke and M. O'Connor report that the Hithpael verbal stem occurs 830 times in Biblical Hebrew (BH), using 175 verbal roots,[276] and indicate that the stem serves primarily as a reflexive or reciprocal verbal pattern, and secondarily in a passive capacity, and that the Hithpael is associated with the Piel.[277] Bill Arnold and John Choi also note the connection with the Piel, and suggest four semantic categories: the reflexive, the reciprocal, the iterative, and the denominative, providing biblical examples of each.[278]

Of the 830 occurrences of the Hithpael in the OT, 64 are of the verb הלך (*halak*),[279] which are shown in Table 1.

Table 1—Occurrences of התהלך (*hithallek*, "to walk intentionally) in the Old Testament

Notes for Table 1:

1. The Hebrew in column 2 has been pointed to clearly identify for the Hebrew scholar all the nuances that are included in the pointing.
2. The Septuagint (LXX) Greek in column 3 is the lexical form, since the actual usage of the word (person, number, tense, voice, mood; or in the case of περίοδος, gender, case, number) are not important to our present study, but only the word chosen by the LXX translators to convey the meaning of התהלך (*hithallek*).
3. The words that represent התהלך (*hithallek*) in the ESV translation in column 5 have been italicized. Although the word or phrase so translated is obvious in many verses (e.g., Gen. 3:8; 5:22, 24; 6:9), there are other

[276] Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 361; on 429, they suggest "there are over 825 occurrences of the *Hithpael*, involving 175 roots, many of them used only once"; italics original.

[277] Waltke and O'Connor, *Syntax*, 424; who give biblical examples of the reflexive, the reciprocal, and the passive uses of the Hithpael (429-32), which help make these distinctions clear.

[278] Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 47-48.

[279] Citing a study by A. F. Bean, Waltke and O'Connor suggest that the Hithpael can be found throughout the biblical record in all genres and from every period—that is, pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic—but that it has evolved from a primarily reflexive stem to a more passive sense over time. They further suggest, apart from Bean, that the verbal root הלך (*halak*), when placed in the Hithpael stem, can possibly be traced to the Akkadian language; Waltke and O'Connor, *Syntax*, 428-29.

verses where there might be confusion (e.g., Job 1:7; 2:2, where the previous phrase, "from going to and fro," could be easily confused, but is actually a different verb in Biblical Hebrew).

4. In column 4 a code is employed that expresses the use of התהלך (*hithallek*) that is intended by the biblical writer. There are two exceptions, where a code has not been provided.[280] The key to the code is as follows:

G	Geography (literal movement from one place to another) G1 = Geographical movement that is intentional G2 = Geographical movement in the sense of scouting or surveying land or people G3 = The same as G2, except in the evil sense of prowling
CH	Character (either good or evil)
R	Relationship

Text	Hebrew Word	LXX Greek	Code	Verse
Gen. 3:8	מִתְהַלֵּךְ	περιπατέω	No Code	"And they heard the sound of the LORD God *walking* in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden."
Gen. 5:22	וַיִּתְהַלֶּךְ	ἀρέσκω	R	"Enoch *walked* with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters."
Gen. 5:24	וַיִּתְהַלֶּךְ	ἀρέσκω	R	"Enoch *walked* with God, and he was not, for God took him."
Gen. 6:9	הִתְהַלֶּךְ	ἀρέσκω	R	"These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah *walked* with God."
Gen. 13:17	הִתְהַלֶּךְ	διοδεύω	G2	"Arise, *walk* through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you."
Gen. 17:1	הִתְהַלֵּךְ	ἀρέσκω	R	"When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to him, 'I am God Almighty; *walk* before me, and be blameless...'"
Gen. 24:40	הִתְהַלַּכְתִּי	ἀρέσκω	R	"But he said to me, 'The LORD, before whom *I have walked*, will send his angel with you and prosper your way. You shall take a wife for my son from my clan and from my father's house.'"
Gen. 48:15	הִתְהַלְּכוּ	ἀρέσκω	R	"And he blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac *walked*, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day…"
Exod. 21:19	וְהִתְהַלֵּךְ	περιπατέω	G	(v.18: When men quarrel…) "then if the man rises again and *walks* outdoors with his staff, he who struck him shall be clear; only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall have him thoroughly healed."
Lev. 26:12	וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי	ἐμπεριπατέω	R	"*And I will walk* among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people."

[280] The two exceptions are Gen. 3:8, which will be dealt with later in this chapter, and Prov. 24:34, which appears to be an anomaly.

Deut. 23:14 (BH: v. 15)	מִתְהַלֵּךְ	ἐμπεριπατέω	R	"Because the LORD your God *walks* in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you."
Josh. 18:4	וְיִתְהַלְּכוּ	διέρχομαι	G2	"Provide three men from each tribe, and I will send them out that they may set out *and go up and down* the land. They shall write a description of it with a view to their inheritances, and then come to me."
Josh. 18:8	וְהִתְהַלְּכוּ	πορεύομαι	G2	"So the men rose up and went, and Joshua charged those who went to write the description of the land, saying, '*Go up and down* in the land and write a description and return to me. And I will cast lots for you here before the LORD at Shiloh."
Judg. 21:24	וַיִּתְהַלְּכוּ	περιπατέω	G1	"*And* the people of Israel *departed* from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family, and they went out from there every man to his inheritance."
1 Sam. 2:30	יִתְהַלְּכוּ	διέρχομαι	R	"Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: 'I promised that your house and the house of your father *should go in and out* before me,' but now the LORD declares, 'Far be it from me, for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.'"
1 Sam. 2:35	וְהִתְהַלֵּךְ	διέρχομαι	R	"And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and *he shall go in and out* before my anointed forever."
1 Sam. 12:2	מִתְהַלֵּךְ	διαπορεύομαι	R	"And now, behold, the king *walks* before you, and I am old and gray…"
1 Sam. 12:2	הִתְהַלַּכְתִּי	διέρχομαι	R	"…and behold, my sons are with you. *I have walked* before you from my youth until this day."
1 Sam. 23:13	וַיִּתְהַלְּכוּ	πορεύομαι	G1	"Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, *and they went*…"
1 Sam. 23:13	יִתְהַלָּכוּ	πορεύομαι	G1	"…wherever *they could go*. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition."
1 Sam. 25:15	הִתְהַלַּכְנוּ	LXX does not translate התהלך	G1	"Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we did not miss anything when we were in the fields, as long as *we went* with them."
1 Sam. 25:27	הַמִּתְהַלְּכִים	παρίστημι	R	"And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men *who follow* my lord."
1 Sam. 30:31	הִתְהַלֵּךְ	διέρχομαι	G2	"In Hebron, for all the places where David and his men *had roamed*."
2 Sam. 7:6	מִתְהַלֵּךְ	ἐμπεριπατέω	R	"I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people from Egypt to this day,

				but *I have been moving about* in a tent for my dwelling."
2 Sam. 7:7	הִתְהַלַּכְתִּי	διέρχομαι	R	"In all the places where *I have moved* with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'"
2 Sam. 11:2	וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ	περιπατέω	G1	"It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch *and was walking* on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful."
2 Kgs. 20:3	הִתְהַלַּכְתִּי	περιπατέω	R	"'Now, O LORD, please remember how *I have walked* before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight.' And Hezekiah wept bitterly."
1 Chr. 16:20	וַיִּתְהַלְּכוּ	πορεύομαι	G	"…*wandering* from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people."
1 Chr. 17:6	הִתְהַלַּכְתִּי	διέρχομαι	R	"In all places where *I have moved* with all Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'"
1 Chr. 21:4	וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ	διέρχομαι	G2	"But the king's word prevailed against Joab. So Joab departed *and went* throughout all Israel and came back to Jerusalem."
Esth. 2:11	מִתְהַלֵּךְ	περιπατέω	G1	"And every day Mordecai *walked* in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and what was happening to her."
Job 1:7	וּמֵהִתְהַלֵּךְ	ἐμπεριπατέω	G3	"The LORD said to Satan, 'From where have you come?' Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From going to and fro on the earth, *and from walking up and down* on it.'"
Job 2:2	וּמֵהִתְהַלֵּךְ	ἐμπεριπατέω	G3	"And the LORD said to Satan, 'From where have you come?' Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From going to and fro on the earth, *and from walking up and down* on it.'"
Job 18:8	יִתְהַלָּךְ	ἑλίσσω	CH	"For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and *he walks* on its mesh."
Job 22:14	יִתְהַלָּךְ	διαπορεύομαι	G	"Thick clouds veil [God], so that he does not see, and *he walks* on the vault of heaven."
Job 38:16	הִתְהַלָּכְתָּ	περιπατέω	G	"Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or *walked* in the recesses of the deep?"
Ps. 12:8 (BH: v. 9)	יִתְהַלָּכוּן	περιπατέω	G3	"On every side the wicked *prowl*, as vileness is exalted among the children of man."
Ps. 26:3	וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי	ἀρέσκω	R	"For your steadfast love is before my eyes, *and I walk* in your faithfulness."
Ps. 35:14	הִתְהַלָּכְתִּי	ἀρέσκω	CH	"*I went about* as though I grieved for my friend or my brother, as one who laments his mother, I bowed down in mourning."
Ps. 39:6 (BH: v. 7)	יִתְהַלֵּךְ	διαπορεύομαι	CH	"Surely a man *goes about* as a shadow! Surely for nothing they are in turmoil; man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather."

Ps. 43:2	אֶתְהַלֵּךְ	πορεύομαι	CH	"For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you rejected me? Why *do I go about* mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"
Ps. 56:13 (BH: v. 14)	לְהִתְהַלֵּךְ	ἀρέσκω	CH/R	"For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, *that I may walk* before God in the light of life."
Ps. 58:7 (BH: v. 8)	יִתְהַלְּכוּ	διαπορεύομαι	G	"Let them vanish like water *that runs away*; when he aims his arrows, let them be blunted."
Ps. 68:21 (BH: v. 22)	מִתְהַלֵּךְ	διαπορεύομαι	CH	"But God will strike the heads of his enemies, the hairy crown of him *who walks* in his guilty ways."
Ps. 77:17 (BH: v. 18)	יִתְהַלָּכוּ	διαπορεύομαι	G	"The clouds poured out water; the skies gave forth thunder; your arrows *flashed on every side*."
Ps. 82:5	יִתְהַלָּכוּ	διαπορεύομαι	CH	"They have neither knowledge nor understanding, *they walk about* in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken."
Ps. 101:2	אֶתְהַלֵּךְ	διαπορεύομαι	CH	"I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh when will you come to me? *I will walk* with integrity of heart within my house."
Ps. 105:13	וַיִּתְהַלְּכוּ	διέρχομαι	G	"…*wandering* from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people."
Ps. 116:9	אֶתְהַלֵּךְ	ἀρέσκω	R	"*I will walk* before the LORD in the land of the living."
Ps. 119:45	וְאֶתְהַלְּכָה	πορεύομαι	CH	"*And I shall walk* in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts."
Prov. 6:22	בְּהִתְהַלֶּכְךָ	περιπατέω	CH	"*When you walk*, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you."
Prov. 20:7	מִתְהַלֵּךְ	ἀναστρέφω	CH	"The righteous *who walks* in his integrity"
Prov. 23:31	יִתְהַלֵּךְ	περιπατέω	G	"Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and *goes down* smoothly."
Prov. 24:34	מִתְהַלֵּךְ	προπορεύομαι	No Code	"And poverty will come upon you *like a robber*, and want like an armed man."
Isa. 38:3	הִתְהַלַּכְתִּי	πορεύομαι	R	"and he said, 'Please O LORD, remember how *I have walked* before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight.' And Hezekiah wept bitterly."
Ezek. 1:13	מִתְהַלֶּכֶת	συστρέφω	G	"As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches *moving to and fro* among the living creatures. And the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning."
Ezek. 19:6	וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ	ἀναστρέφω	G3	"*He prowled* among the lions; he became a young lion, and he learned to catch prey; he devoured men."
Ezek. 28:14	הִתְהַלָּכְתָּ	LXX does not translate התהלך	G1	"You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you, you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire *you walked*."

Zech. 1:10	לְהִתְהַלֵּךְ	περίοδος	G2	"So the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered, 'These are they whom the LORD sent *to patrol* the earth.'"
Zech. 1:11	הִתְהַלַּכְנוּ	περίοδος	G2	"And they answered the angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees, and said, '*We have patrolled* the earth, and behold, all the earth remains at rest.'"
Zech. 6:7	לְהִתְהַלֵּךְ	περίοδος	G2	"When the strong horses came out, they were impatient to go and *patrol* the earth…"
Zech. 6:7	הִתְהַלְּכוּ	περίοδος	G2	"…And he said, 'Go, *patrol* the earth.'…"
Zech. 6:7	וַתִּתְהַלַּכְנָה	περίοδος	G2	"…*So they patrolled* the earth."
Zech. 10:12	יִתְהַלָּכוּ	κατακαυχάομαι	CH/R	"'I will make them strong in the LORD, and *they shall walk* in his name,' declares the LORD."

In the cases where התהלך (*hithallek*) represents geographical movement, that movement is seldom random. Nine of those cases do not specifically point to intentionality, although two of the texts speak of God walking in the heavenly realm (Job 22:14; 38:16), with whom nothing is ever random and unintentional. Four of the texts speak of inanimate objects in movement (Ps. 58:7; 77:17; Prov. 23:31; Ezek. 1:13). Two texts represent the same phrase, "wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people," a reference to the patriarchs (1 Chron. 16:20; Ps. 105:13).[281] If the biblical author has in mind Abram's move from Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran and then to Canaan, or even his move down into Egypt and back to Shechem, these appear to be divinely inspired movements and should not be thought of as arbitrary. However, since the references appear to be more general in nature, covering the entire patriarchal age over a period of several hundred years, it may be conceded that the nomadic movement indicated in these verses is often merely geographical in nature, although of great importance because the geographical

[281] Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, WBC 21 (Dallas: Word, 2002), 56; Charles A. Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, ICC (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1906-1907), 344; Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 5:662; Roddy Braun, *1 Chronicles*, WBC 14 (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 192.

movement shows their obedience to God. The final text in this section is Exodus 21:19, where two men have fought, with one of them being hurt enough to be bedridden; the text suggests that if he later gets up from his bed and walks outside the house—that is, he is not severely and permanently injured, then the man who injured him shall only have to pay for the time lost in work. This reference is clearly geographical movement and does not suggest any intentionality.

Beyond these more general references, we find in Table 1 three categories that fall into the geographical movement, but which are anything but arbitrary. The first, which has been coded G1, represents geographical movement that is intentional. Since that is the point of this part of our study, it seems overly obvious to refer to these texts in this way. But looking at them, we find that the movement is anything but haphazard, and should therefore be noted. In Judges 21:24, for instance, we find the men of Benjamin are returning home with their wives to settle in; in 1 Samuel 23:13, David and his 600 men run to escape the wrath of Saul and his army; in 1 Samuel 25:15, wicked Nabal's young men in the field stay near David's men to find protection; in 2 Samuel 11:2, David walks upon the roof of his palace and sees Bathsheba bathing;[282] in Esther 2:11, Mordecai daily checks on his niece's well-being in the harem; and in Ezekiel 28:14, pre-disobedient Lucifer walks in the heavenly court. Nothing casual or arbitrary can be meant by any of these uses of התהלך (*hithallek*).

The second and third sub-codes, marked G2 and G3, represent the idea of scouting or surveying either land or people, or in the negative sense, prowling. It should be noted that whether the action is positive, as in Abram scouting out the Land of Promise in Genesis 13:17, or negative,

[282] This text has often been characterized as accidental, with David not having planned his actions, although there are other signs in the text that would suggest otherwise; however, the point of this paper is not advanced by pursuing that possibility except in this note.

as in Satan "walking up and down" on the earth in Job 1:7; 2:2,[283] the action itself conveys the same idea, and is simply distinguished to help the reader understand the context.

We find a series of 12 texts marked CH that are pointing to lifestyle and character, including Psalm 68:21, which speaks of one who "*walks* in his guilty ways," and David's determination to "*walk* with integrity" within his house, as shown in Psalm 101:2. We also find another 22 texts marked R that point to relationship as the intended meaning, including Samuel's farewell address, where he affirms, "I *have walked* before you from my youth until this day" (1 Sam. 12:2). Two texts cross between character (CH) and relationship (R), and could be supported in either category (Ps. 56:13 and Zech. 10:12).[284]

IV. The Septuagint Translation of התהלך (*Hithallek*)

Of the sixty-four occurrences of הלך (*halak*) in the Hithpael verbal stem in the OT, Greek scholars in the Septuagint[285] used fourteen Greek verbs to translate them. When grouped by associated lexical forms, the number drops to ten. Moisés Silva, in his *New International Dictionary of New*

[283] With Peter's description in 1 Pet. 5:8, this also can be understood as prowling with evil intent.

[284] Lastly it should be noted that there are two occurrences which have not been dealt with. The first is Gen. 3:8, which will be treated at great length later in this chapter. The second is Prov. 24:34, which seems to have nothing to do with walking—geographically or otherwise. Commenting on this text (and its nearly-identical verse in Prov. 6:11), Barnes suggests that the reference to walking comes out of the fear of being plundered by a "traveller," an "armed robber" [Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament: Proverbs—Ezekiel*, eds. F. C. Cook and J. M. Fuller (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1977), 26-27].

[285] The Greek translation of the HB is called the Septuagint, and is most often referred to as LXX because of the 70 (72) scholars who worked on the translation, who began with the Torah in the mid-3rd century BC, with the remainder of the HB being "translated within the following two or three centuries"; Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 13.

Testament Theology and Exegesis, treats five of these.[286] This variety of Greek verbs demonstrates the various nuances expressed by the Hebrew verb התהלך (*hithallek*), which could be described as facets of a diamond.

Table 2—Verbs Representing התהלך in the Greek Septuagint (Arranged by Lexical Form)

LXX Greek (No. Occurrences)	English Transliteration	Basic Meaning (*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*)
(πορεύω)	(*poreuō*)	"Sept. often for הָלַךְ, הִתְהַלֵּךְ, יָלַךְ; prop. *to lead one's self across; i.e., to take one's way… set out, depart*" (p. 531)
πορεύομαι (7)	*poreuomai*	(present tense of πορεύω) (p. 531)
διαπορεύομαι (8)	*diaporeuomai*	"*to journey through a place, go through*" (p. 141)
προπορεύομαι (1)	*proporeuomai*	"*to send before, to make to proceed*…of a messenger or a herald" (p. 541)
(πατέω)	(*pateō*)	"Sept. for דָּרַךְ, etc.; *to tread, to trample under foot*" (p. 494)
περιπατέω (10)	*peripateō*	"Sept. for הָלַךְ; *to walk*; [*walk about* A.V. 1 Pet. v.8] (p. 504)
ἐμπεριπατέω (5)	*emperipateō*	"*to go about in, walk in*… (Job i:7…)" (p. 208)
ἀρεσκω (10)	*areskō*	"*to please… to strive to please; to accommodate one's self to the opinions, desires, interests of others*" (p. 72)
(ἔρχομαι)	(*erchomai*)	"Sept. for בּוֹא, rarely for אָתָה and יָלַךְ … univ. *to come from one place into another…to come into*" (p. 250) … (הָלַךְ אַחֲרֵי), to follow one" (p. 252)
διέρχομαι (9)	*dierchomai*	"*to go through, pass through*" (p. 147)
περίοδος (5)	*periodos*	[Note: *BibleWorks* indicates no entry]. cf. ὁδος "Sept. numberless times for דֶּרֶךְ, less frequently for אֹרַח… *a way… a travelled way, road*" (p. 437)
(στρέφω)	(*strephō*)	"Sept. for הָפַךְ, also for סָבַב… *to turn, turn round*" (p.590)
ἀναστρέφω (2)	*anastrephō*	"like the Hebr. הָלַךְ to walk, of the manner of life and moral character, *to conduct one's self, behave one's self, live*" (p. 42)
συστρέφω (1)	*sustrephō*	"*to twist together, roll together* (into a bundle)" (p. 608)
διοδεύω (1)	*diodeuō*	"*to pass* or *travel through* … Sept." (p. 152)
ἑλίσσω (1)	*helissō*	"*to roll up, fold together*" (p. 204)
κατακαυχάομαι (1)	*katakauchaomai*	"*to glory against, to exult over*… Zech. x.12" (p. 331)
παρίσημι (1)	*paristēmi*	"(Sept. chiefly for עָמַד, also for נִצַּב). *to stand beside, stand by* or *near, to be at hand, be present*… univ. *to stand by*" (p. 489)

[286] Πατέω (*pateō*), πορεύομαι (*poreuomai*), ἔρχομαι (*erchomai*), ἀναστρέφω (*anastrephō*), and ἀρεσκω (*areskō*); Silva, "Hebrew and Aramaic Word Index," *NIDNTTE* 5:323.

Looking at the original work in the LXX Torah, we find eleven occurrences of התהלך (*hithallek*), and four Greek words to translate them: ἀρεσκω (*areskō*) appears six times in Genesis; περιπατέω (*peripateō*) appears once each in Genesis and Exodus; ἐμπεριπατέω (*emperipateō*) appears once each in Leviticus and Deuteronomy; and διοδεύω (*diodeuō*) appears once in Genesis.

Of greatest interest to this present study are those Greek translations occurring in Genesis, which represent both the primeval and patriarchal ages. The Hithpael of הלך (*halak*) appears eight times, with LXX translators choosing ἀρέσκω (*areskō*, "to please")[287] for six of these eight occurrences. Moisés Silva suggests that the verb ἀρέσκω (*areskō*), which appears fourteen times in the LXX as a whole, including seven times in Genesis[288] and four times in Psalms, is usually a translation for Hebrew הלך (*halak*). He further notes that in the NT, the word group denotes "pleasure in the sight of God or Christ," citing its use in Colossians 1:10, "so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him."[289] Thus, to "walk with God" (Gen. 5:22, 24; 6:9), or to "walk before God" (Gen. 24:40; 48:15), was seen by these translators as an attempt by Enoch, Noah, and Israel's patriarchs to please God in some way; and the command to Abram to "walk before me" was a spoken expectation that he would make this same attempt as Enoch and Noah before him. But as we will see, it would never be merely a human effort to please God—which effort would surely fail—but such a desire to please God would be borne in relationship, with divine help along the way.

[287] Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2019), 72.

[288] The occurrence in Gen. that is not noted in Table 1 is Gen. 39:4, where ἀρέσκω (*areskō*) is a translation of the Hebrew שׁרת (*sharat*, "to minister"), which is not related to our study.

[289] Silva, "αρέσκω," *NIDNTTE* 1:386.

V. Understanding the Biblical Texts in Genesis That Contain התהלך (*Hithallek*)

We now turn to the texts in Genesis that have fueled this idea that we can find biblical monotheism from Adam to Abraham. Of the eight occurrences of התהלך (*hithallek*, to walk intentionally), there is a sense of intentionality throughout, including Genesis 13:17, where Yahweh commands Abram to "arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land." It was Yahweh's intention to give the land to Abram and his offspring forever, and this walk was an intentional scouting of the land, an expedition of faith. The remaining seven texts will have direct bearing on the relationship that Yahweh Himself was modeling in the garden, and also expecting of those who would follow Him in obedience.

A. Genesis 3:8 – The LORD God Walking in the Garden

Much of our approach in this study has been to begin at a point in early Israel's Exodus or wilderness experience and move backward into the patriarchal and then the primeval ages. In this penultimate stage of our discovery, however, it will be helpful to begin with God's own walking with Adam and Eve in the garden. Once we understand this initial appearance of התהלך (*hithallek*), we will be better able to understand that which follows.

In Genesis 3:8 we are told that Adam and Eve "heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden." This verse suggests four aspects that should be explored in connection to God's walking in the garden: the *conditions* of the walk, the *time* of the walk, the *frequency* of the walk, and the *purpose* of the walk.

The conditions of the walk. The question arises: Did God take on bodily form for this walk, or were Adam and Eve, in their original state, able to communicate with God as spirit, without

accommodation? Many years later, when Moses asked to see Yahweh's glory, he was told that it would not be possible for a human to see the fulness of God's spiritual being "and live" (Exod. 33:18-20). But was that different for Adam and Eve prior to their disobedience and fall? There is nothing in the text that would lead us to one conclusion or the other, although both Leupold and Fretheim suggest He "assumed some form analogous to the human form which was made in his image."[290]

The time of the walk. Concerning the time of God's walk in the garden, the general consensus in the commentaries is that לרוח היום (*leruakh hayyom*) means "in the wind of the day," suggesting the time of day when the wind begins to give a reprieve from the Middle Eastern sun. Arnold suggests "in the dusk's coolness."[291] There are only two dissenting opinions. The first is from Cassuto, who struggles with the application of a temporal meaning to the attached preposition,[292] but suggests that the primary purpose of placing the time in this verse is to measure it against God's initial decree in 2:17, that "in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." According to Cassuto, this shows that the word of God "was wholly fulfilled, even in its literal meaning."[293]

The second dissenting opinion as to the meaning of this phrase comes from Walton, who attempts to take a closer look at רוח (*ruakh*, "spirit, wind"), ים (*yom*, "day"), and קול (*qol*, "voice,

[290] Leupold, *Genesis*, 155; see also Terence E. Fretheim, *The Book of Genesis: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, NIBC 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015), 51.

[291] Arnold, *Genesis*, 67.

[292] U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part One: From Adam to Noah*, trans. from Hebrew by Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 152-54.

[293] Cassuto, *Genesis, Part One*, 154.

sound"), which together appear in Genesis 3:8. He suggests that the two that presently concern us (*ruakh* and *yom*) do not appear together elsewhere in the OT, although *ruakh* and *qol* appear together in Jeremiah 10:13 and 51:16, "but in the context of a storm." Walton suggests that in Akkadian, the word for "day" can also mean "storm," and offers an alternate translation to the Genesis passage: "they heard the roar of the LORD moving about in the garden in the wind of the storm,"[294] suggesting that Yahweh was angry at their disobedience and came in a storm. Although Walton agrees that this alternate translation "can only be held tentatively," it would provide a good reason why Adam and Eve hid among the trees.

The frequency of the walk. There is no mention of an earlier visit, but there are clues built into the text that would suggest this was not the first time Yahweh had walked in the garden. Hamilton suggests that the Hithpael signals "iterative and habitual aspects,[295] while Leupold suggests it is the article before *yom* that signals the frequency, which he calls "the article of absolute familiarity," suggesting a daily occurrence.[296] Leupold also suggests that "the almost casual way in which this is remarked indicates that this did not occur for the first time just then."[297]

The purpose of the walk. While we do not know the conditions of Yahweh's walk (whether He appeared in bodily form or without any accommodation), scholars have suggested that he walked with Adam and Eve at the end of the day as the evening breezes were cooling off the

[294] John H. Walton, *Genesis,* NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 234.

[295] Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, ed. R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 1:192; see also Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Genesis*, 3rd ed., ABC (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2019), 98.

[296] Leupold, *Genesis*, 156.

[297] Leupold, *Genesis*, 155.

garden, and that this walk was how they regularly ended the day. But the heaviest question in this text is *why* Yahweh would make this effort at all. Even if it did not require some form of accommodation for their flesh to be able to dwell in the presence of the utterly spiritual, they were still a part of the created order, and Yahweh was wholly Other.

To read the commentaries gives little clue whatever as to the purpose, the true nature, of the walk. Genesis 3:8 is treated as a given: Yahweh walked in the garden, with scholars commenting instead on when the walk occurred and why Adam and Eve hid. But the LXX translators chose not to employ the Greek ἀρέσκω (*areskō*, "to please, to strive to please"), which they used in Genesis 5:22, 24 (of Enoch's walk) and in Genesis 6:9 (of Noah's walk). Instead, they chose περιπατέω (*peripateō*) which, according to Silva, occurs more than thirty times in the LXX, almost always to represent a form of הלך (*halak*). Silva also suggests that "only occasionally is περιπατέω used figuratively to denote conduct (2 Kgs. 20:3; Eccl. 11:9); for this meaning the LXX prefers πορεύομαι" (*poreuomai*).[298]

Thayer suggests that in the LXX, περιπατέω (*peripateō*) means "to walk; walk about." But he suggests that in figurative discussion, its equivalence is "to make a due use of opportunities,"[299] pointing to John 12:35, which says, "So Jesus said, 'The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk (*peripateō*) while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks (*peripateō*) in the darkness does not know where he is going." In this verse, then, we see clear intentionality in the midst of living out one's life and calling. It is *this* Greek word that the LXX translators used to represent Yahweh's walking in the garden—a walk with great intentionality.

[298] Silva, "περιπατέω," *NIDNTTE* 3:674.

[299] Thayer, *TGELNT*, 504.

This study will argue that Yahweh, in His walking in the garden, was establishing not only what the divine-human relationship was intended to be, but what every relationship had the potential of being, including relationship with each other, and with the creation that was placed at their disposal. As we will discover, Adam needed help understanding how relationships work.

In their groundbreaking monograph on human development in theological perspective, Balswick, King, and Reimer suggest that the development of the self happens in community, and that "human input is necessary if children are to take on human characteristics," since "human behavior begets human behavior."[300] But Adam had neither community nor human input since he was the first human. We further note that he was not created as a child who would grow into manhood. Therefore, when it came to relationships of any kind, Adam had no points of reference. So how would he learn this art?

Christian doctrine teaches that the *idea* of relationship first existed in the Godhead as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit interact with each other. Catherine LaCugna suggests that "the doctrine of the Trinity is the summary of Christian faith in God, who out of love creates humanity for union with God."[301] She suggests that it was developed in stages by the Church Fathers, often in response to heresies, and that in the fourth century there was a shift "from function to ontology, from the 'economic trinity' (Father, Son, and Spirit in relation to us) to the 'immanent' or 'essential Trinity' (Father, Son, and Spirit in relation to each other)."[302] Over the next few centuries there were Church Councils which agreed upon key ingredients of the doctrine, including the fact that

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[300] Jack O. Balswick, Pamela Ebstyne King, and Kevin S. Reimer, *The Reciprocating Self: Human Development in Theological Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 101-2.

[301] Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "Trinity," *ER* 15:53.

[302] LaCugna, "Trinity," 54.

Christ was of the same substance with God (Nicaea in AD 325), and that the Spirit was divine (Constantinople in AD 381). LaCugna suggests that "at the close of the patristic period John of Damascus (d. 749) summarized Greek trinitarian doctrine with the doctrine of *perichōresis*…the mutual indwelling of the divine persons."[303]

Balswick, King, and Reimer suggest that this *perichōresis* "refers to the mutual indwelling within the Godhead, meaning that the three persons of the Trinity dwell with and within each other. Thus it describes a mode of being in communion that does not sacrifice difference or diversity," later described as "relatedness without absorption."[304]

Therefore, taking that idea to its natural conclusion, this study will suggest that, since the *idea* of relationship was first experienced in the Godhead in *perichōresis*,[305] and since human relationship would be an outgrowth of that, it was necessary for what was hoped for and expected by Yahweh to be modeled for Adam.

But exactly what was hoped for and expected for human relationship? The text is not clear how long Adam was in the garden alone before he understands the void that his aloneness has created. In fact, apart from six days of creation followed by a day of sabbath rest, there is no sense of timing in the first chapters of Genesis. Nor is there indication whether Yahweh's regular walk began with Adam alone and only later included Eve, or whether such a walk did not begin until after her creation. This study will argue for the former.

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[303] LaCugna, "Trinity," 55.

[304] Balswick, King, and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self*, 37.

[305] For a discussion of *perichōresis*, a term used by the Church Fathers by the end of the 8th century to describe the internal relationship within the Trinity, see Balswick, King, and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self*, 36-40.

Balswick, King, and Reimer suggest that "deprived of human social environment, there is very little in the biological structure of children that would induce them to embrace norms, values or attitudes. On the other hand, when children are nested within human community, they generally take on the attitudes and behaviors of that community."[306] This would suggest that Adam, left to himself, would not know how to relate to Eve when the time came, and some demonstration of the inherent principles found in trinitarian *perichōresis*—if that was the expectation—was necessary.

The biblical text is clear that Yahweh came alongside Adam in the task of naming the beasts and fish—He *brought them* to Adam (Gen. 2:19). In that teaching process, Adam learns how properly to identify and care for that part of creation that was placed under his dominion. But at the end of the process it is clear that the intimacy of relationship Yahweh was expecting *for* Adam would not be found among that which had already been created. This was not a *discovery* for the all-knowing Yahweh, but was a necessary discovery for Adam.

It is also interesting that the biblical writer frames that teaching exercise (vv. 19-20a) with two indicators (vv. 18, 20b) that Yahweh was expecting something more for Adam:

A Then the LORD God said, "it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him *a helper fit for him*. (2:18)

B Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. (2:19-20a)

A[1] But for Adam there was not found *a helper fit for him*. (2:20b)

In this way, Yahweh was making it clear to Adam that something (or someone) other than the animals was needed—"a helper fit for him."

[306] Balswick, King, and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self*, 102.

Although Adam was not a child, Balswick, King, and Reimer suggest (in the citation above) that there is nothing in his biological structure that would "induce [him] to embrace norms, values or attitudes." If his relationship with Eve was to be optimal, it would need to be modeled by Yahweh—a model that would come out of the trinitarian *perichōresis*, that is, the mutual indwelling that we see in the Godhead. Balswick, King, and Reimer suggest that

> such relationships are characterized by mutuality, give and take, and they enable the self to be known most fully in the process of knowing another. In such relationships there is space to simultaneously be oneself and to be in relationship with each other. There is room to encounter the other and to encounter the self through the other. The self is never lost in the face of the other. The other does not impinge on the self, but the other promotes the presence of the self.[307]

Therefore, whether that relationship is with the divine Other, the human other, or with creation in some sense, the ideal must somehow be modeled—a relationship which has at its core the characteristics of availability and vulnerability.

Looking at Genesis 3:8 relationally, then, we find that Yahweh first made Himself available to His new creation—not creating them and then leaving them to fend for themselves, but teaching them His norms and ways through community with Him. He would be personally engaged with them as they grew accustomed to their new surroundings. He would also be vulnerable as He gives them free will—the ability and option to choose obedience or disobedience, thereby either accepting or rejecting His authority over them and over all creation. In this way, the Creator could be set aside and His will ignored.

There is one more aspect that would be necessary in this modeling of relationship. It was not to end with Adam and Eve, but would become the inheritance passed from generation to generation. These first humans may have been created as adults without human parents and without

[307] Balswick, King, and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self,* 41-42.

human community, but every human thereafter, every generation to come, would have relationship modeled for them—either appropriately or inappropriately, but nonetheless modeled—by their parents and their community.

The text gives the reader no further direct information about Adam and Eve after they leave the garden, except that Eve bore Seth (Gen. 4:25) and Adam lived 930 years in all (Gen. 5:5). But the fact that Cain and Abel bring an offering to Yahweh in Genesis 4:3-4 seems to speak, at least in some measure, of the repaired relationship Adam and Eve have with Yahweh following their disobedience and expulsion, and of the modeling of human-divine relationship they offer their sons. There is no other explanation for Cain and Abel to have decided to bring gifts.

Adeyemo, in his *Africa Bible Commentary*, refers to Leviticus 3:16, suggesting that the divine pleasure at Abel's gift and displeasure at Cain's was based on a sacrifice from Abel that was acceptable to Yahweh, that is, a blood sacrifice, whereas Cain's was only "what pleased him, not what pleased God," that is, a bloodless sacrifice.[308] However, Keil and Delitzsch appropriately argue that it was what the gift meant to the giver—that is, Abel brought the first and the best, while Cain simply brought a gift.[309] Nevertheless, they agree that both gifts were "not in consequence of a divine command, but from the free impulse of their nature."[310] Sarna suggests that Abel's "choicest" gift demonstrates "a quality of the heart and mind that Cain did not have. Abel's act of worship was an inward experience, an ungrudging, open-hearted, concentrated devotion. Cain's

[308] Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 17.

[309] Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT*, 1:69.

[310] Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT*, 1:69.

noble purpose was sullied by the intrusion of the self, a defect that blocked the spiritual channels with God."[311]

Later in this chapter this study will consider the presence or absence of cultic expression during the primeval and patriarchal ages. What is of interest at the moment is simply the relational inheritance from Adam and Eve to their sons and the generations to follow. It would seem that Adam and Eve were still walking with God, albeit outside the garden, and they had instructed their sons in this way of life which characterizes godly relationship.

B. Genesis 5:22, 24; 6:9 – Enoch and Noah Walked with God

Despite the character flaws that are evident in the generations immediately following Adam, including Lamech and his violence,[312] not everything coming out of Cain's bloodline is bent toward evil. Not only are Lamech's three sons shown to be honorable, each in his own profession, but the biblical writer ends the fourth chapter noting a new start with the birth of Seth to Adam and Eve, and a note that "at that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD" (Gen. 4:25-26).

But the biblical writer is interested in connecting the generations from Adam to Abraham, not simply as a genealogical tool but as a confession of faith. Two key figures in that line of witness are Enoch the son of Jared, the seventh generation from Adam, and Noah the son of Lamech, the tenth generation from Adam.

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[311] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 29.

[312] Lamech, a descendant of Cain and seventh from Adam, whose story is told in Gen. 4:18-24, is not to be confused with Noah's father Lamech, whose story is told in Gen. 5:25-31.

Our attention is first drawn to Enoch. We are told that "Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him" (Gen. 5:22-24). Twice in this short passage we are told that "Enoch walked (התהלך, *hithallek*) with God."

The biblical writer has established a verbal pattern in the genealogical record in Genesis 5, breaking that pattern only three times: with Adam, with Enoch, and with Noah (each italicized below):

"When Adam had lived (וַיְחִי, *vayehi*) 130 years…" (v. 3)
"*The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years*…" (v. 4)
"When Seth had lived (וַיְחִי, *vayehi*) 105 years…" (v. 6)
"Seth lived after he fathered Enosh 807 years…" (v. 7)
"When Enosh had lived (וַיְחִי, *vayehi*) 90 years…" (v. 9)
"Enosh lived after he fathered Kenan 815 years…" (v. 10)
"When Kenan had lived (וַיְחִי, *vayehi*) 70 years…" (v. 12)
"Kenan lived after he fathered Mahalalel 840 years…" (v. 13)
"When Mahalalel had lived (וַיְחִי, *vayehi*) 65 years…" (v. 15)
"Mahalalel lived after he fathered Jared 830 years…" (v. 16)
"When Jared had lived (וַיְחִי, *vayehi*) 162 years…" (v. 18)
"Jared lived after he fathered Enoch 800 years…" (v. 19)
"When Enoch had lived (וַיְחִי, *vayehi*) 65 years…" (v. 21)
"*Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years*…" (v. 22)
"When Methuselah had lived (וַיְחִי, *vayehi*) 187 years…" (v. 25)
"Methuselah lived after he fathered Lamech 782 years…" (v. 26)
"When Lamech had lived (וַיְחִי, *vayehi*) 182 years…" (v. 28)
"Lamech lived after he fathered Noah 595 years…" (v. 30)
"*After Noah was 500 years old, Noah fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth*" (v. 32)

The established pattern for the time period up until the birth of the named son is not different for any, including for Adam or Enoch, until we get to Noah. The verb employed in every case, from Adam to Lamech, is חיה (*khayah*, "to live"). But the verbal pattern is broken for Enoch, but only *after* the birth of Methuselah.[313] The text does not explain why a different verb is used,

[313] Wenham suggests that some manuscripts "add 'and Enoch lived,' assimilating to standard formulation of the chapter," but suggests that the MT should be retained; cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 120.

or exactly what happened to distinguish Enoch, except to say that at that point he began to walk with God. Was this an awakening moment for him? Perhaps a Mercy Seat experience,[314] where God reveals Himself and calls for a response. The text does not tell us why there is a change.

What we know is that something happened which would forever change the trajectory of his life. There are only two men in history who have not experienced the trauma of death: Elijah, who "went up by a whirlwind into heaven," accompanied by "chariots of fire and horses of fire" (2 Kgs. 2:11); and Enoch, who "was not, for God took him" (Gen. 5:24). The writer to the Hebrews connects Enoch's removal from the earth—what KJV refers to as "Enoch was translated"—with his faith. The text reads,

> By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Heb. 11:5-6)

By connecting his "translation" with his faith, the writer is suggesting that he not only "pleased God," but that in his desire to "draw near to God," Enoch believed that God existed, he sought Him, and believed he would in some way be rewarded for that seeking. This is not suggesting that Enoch sought God for what he himself could obtain from this seeking, nor that he expected to avoid death. The Greek verb here, as in Gen. 5:22, 24 LXX, is ἀρέσκω (*areskō*, "to please, to strive to please, to accommodate one's self to the opinions, desires, interests of others)."[315] The sense of that verb would not easily allow the underlying desire to be self-interest.

[314] In the faith tradition of The Salvation Army, the Mercy Seat is a place of meeting with God, often characterized by submission and followed by obedience. The Mercy Seat is sometimes called the Altar or the Penitent Form.

[315] Thayer, *TGELNT*, 72.

William Lane suggests, however, that in Jewish tradition Enoch is not singled out for his faith, but for his repentance, based on the distinction "between the period prior to the birth of Enoch's son (v. 21) and the subsequent period during which he 'pleased God' (vv. 22-24)."[316]

It is the Hithpael of הלך (*halak*, "to walk"), which has been shown to signal intentionality, which the biblical writer uses in the Genesis account. Whatever happened at the birth of Methuselah, Enoch began an intentional walk with Yahweh, presumably mirroring what Yahweh Himself had modeled to Adam in the garden. Wenham believes that this phrase in Genesis 5:22, 24 "suggests a special intimacy with God and a life of piety," and that the double mention "indicates Enoch was outstanding in this pious family."[317] Walton acknowledges that the phrase expresses piety.[318] Hamilton suggests that it "captures an emphasis on communion and fellowship."[319]

When our attention is then drawn to Noah, we find that he "was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked (התהלך, *hithallek*) with God" (Gen 6:9). There are three characteristics that are now added to the equation: righteousness, blamelessness, and generational impact.

David Reimer notes that the account of Noah is the first occurrence in the HB of the word צדק (*tsaddiq*, "be just, righteous"), and that in this case, it has a stative sense,[320] that is, Noah is

[316] William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, WBC 47B (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 336-37.

[317] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 127.

[318] Walton, *Genesis*, 279.

[319] Hamilton, *Genesis*, 258.

[320] David J. Reimer, "צדק," *NIDOTTE* 3:748.

said to be in a state of righteousness. The manner in which he has lived his life has kept him in right-standing before God.

The concept of blamelessness has also been added to the equation—a concept that will be carried forward as God sets the spiritual standard for Abram in Genesis 17:1. Olivier states that תמם (*tamim*), occurring more than two-hundred times in the OT, is the Hebrew concept of integrity, conveying completeness or blamelessness. He further suggests that it is "used to indicate the serenity of the unclouded relationship between God and the righteous."[321]

But there is also the added dimension of community: "blameless *in his generation.*" In this community dimension, Peter calls Noah "a herald of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5). The writer to the Hebrews says that "by faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen,[322] in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith" (Heb. 11:7). These texts together suggest that Noah "was faithful in reproving the wickedness of his age, and warned the world of the judgment that was preparing for it."[323]

Peter also speaks of God's great patience as He "waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared" (1 Pet. 3:20), which many have connected with Genesis 6:3, "Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not abide in[324] man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years."

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[321] J. P. J. Olivier, "תמם," *NIDOTTE* 4:306-7.

[322] It should be noted that prior to the flood, the text tells us that "a mist [ESV footnote, *a spring*] was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground" (Gen. 2:5-6), and therefore the fact that this mist/spring should "burst forth, and the windows of heaven were opened" (Gen. 7:11-12) would signal "events as yet unseen."

[323] Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: James, Peter, John, and Jude*, ed. Robert Frew (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1949/1969), 241.

[324] The ESV footnote says, "or *My Spirit shall not contend with.*"

Although scholars are divided whether the 120 years represent a shorter human life span[325] or the length of the grace period before the flood[326]—some cannot decide[327]—the weight will lean toward the limitation of the life span. Although undecided himself, Hamilton suggests that if the 120 years represents the period of grace before the flood, it has a parallel in Jonah 4:5—"God's hand of judgment," Hamilton says, "is put on hold."[328] This writer would argue that it is a grace period before judgment, especially in light of the NT texts and the parallel in Jonah.

But more significant for this study is the fact that the biblical record indicates that "Noah walked (התהלך, *hithallek*) with God" (Gen. 6:9), an intentional walk of piety that is described in terms of relationship with Yahweh. This study would suggest that his witness "in his generation," his preaching, was grounded in that relationship—as indeed every calling of God should be—and thus, in effect, to reject Noah's preaching was to reject Yahweh Himself.

C. Genesis 17:1 – Abram Commanded to Walk Before God

We now turn to Genesis 17, where the biblical record is not simply commenting on a man's walk with God, as with Enoch and Noah, but is indicating that God is *requiring* this intentional relationship if He is to make a covenant with Abram. The biblical text says, "When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty (אל שדי,

[325] See Arnold, *Genesis*, 90; Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, in the series Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1982), 72; Cassuto, *Genesis, Part One*, 297; Fretheim, *Genesis*, 70; Reyburn and Fry, *Handbook on Genesis*, 115.

[326] See Fruchtenbaum, *Genesis*, 149; Leupold, *Genesis*, 256; Waltke, *Genesis*, 117; Wilbur Glenn Williams, *Genesis*, CBS (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2004), 92.

[327] See Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 269; Walton, *Genesis*, 296.

[328] Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 269.

el shaddai]; *walk before* me (התהלך, *hithallek*), and be blameless (תמם, *tamim*), that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.' Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, 'Behold, my covenant is with you…'" (Gen. 17:1-4a).

The command of Yahweh is in two parts. First, "walk before me," which this study has already suggested is an intentional walk of piety found in relationship, specifically here, with Yahweh. But added to that is a characteristic which we saw in Noah, that of blamelessness. Again, Olivier suggests that תמם (*tamim*) is the Hebrew concept of integrity, conveying completeness or blamelessness. He further suggests that it is "used to indicate the serenity of the unclouded relationship between God and the righteous."[329] Wenham considers that this is "an extreme demand," and that Abram is "expected to emulate Noah's moral perfection."[330]

But as we look closer at the text, we find important clues that signal the depth of this demand from Yahweh. The construction of this command is a cohortative following an imperative, which makes the sense of the promised covenant conditional upon Abram's compliance or obedience.[331] Understanding the condition, the text indicates, "then Abram fell on his face." This is Abram's second Mercy Seat experience,[332] the first having been in Genesis 12, where the same

[329] Olivier, "תמם," 4:306-7.

[330] Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, WBC 2 (Dallas: Word, 1987), 20.

[331] Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 111; Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 463; Biblical Studies Press, *NET Bible, Full Notes Edition*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Nelson, 2019), 37; Waltke, *Genesis*, 259.

[332] The Salvation Army's Mercy Seat is a sacred place of meeting with God, a place of submission. For the Salvationist, the two works of grace are justification (often referred to as salvation) and sanctification (holiness). This writer would suggest that Abram's initial call in Gen. 12:1, a call out of an idolatrous setting (although not necessarily a personal experience on Abram's part), marks a beginning in his faith journey, and that this second call marks a heightened expectation by Yahweh—what the Salvationist would call entire sanctification.

cohortative following an imperative appears, and where the text tells us, "So Abram went, as the LORD had told him" (Gen. 12:4). In our present text, Abram bows to the ground in submission, thereby agreeing to walk before God and be blameless. And what is God's response to this submission? "And God said to him, "Behold, my covenant is with you…" Submission accepted.

The remaining two occurrences of התהלך (*hithallek*) in Genesis are confirmation that Abram's experience has borne out this Mercy Seat submission. In 24:40, as Abraham's servant represents his master in securing a wife for Isaac in Mesopotamia, he repeats Abraham's testimony: "The LORD, before whom I have walked (התהלך), will send his angel with you and prosper your way…" And in 48:15, as Jacob is blessing Joseph's sons, he confirms, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked (התהלך), the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day…bless the boys." Abraham has walked before God, he has reared his son Isaac in that same walk, and, although Jacob uses different terminology for himself, it appears that he is claiming that same experience as his own.

V. Understanding Relationship With Yahweh as Biblical Monotheism

From the beginning, this study has been grounded in the belief that monotheism was original with Adam, continuing throughout the primeval and patriarchal ages, and reaffirmed in the early stages of Israelite religion. This belief has a biblical basis, which is confirmed by both Nahum Sarna and Yehezkel Kaufmann. Sarna suggests that "a careful scrutiny of Scripture shows that it regards monotheism as the original religion of mankind."[333]

[333] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 68.

Kaufmann agrees that "biblical tradition represents the fathers of the race and the patriarchs of Israel as monotheists," and that idolatry was "a later degeneration."[334] He further asserts, then, that Abraham is not "the founder of monotheistic religion. He is but a link in the chain of monotheists that goes back to Adam."[335]

Yet Smith holds that to the ancients, the terms monotheism and polytheism held little meaning, and that if one were to ask an ancient if he were monotheistic or polytheistic, "the question would make no sense," because these are modern concepts that we are reading back into the religious life of the ancients. For the ancient Israelites, "what mattered was the exclusive claim and relationship of the Israelite people and their deity."[336] Although coming from a very different perspective, von Rad makes the same point when he says, "A world of religious concepts later systematically arranged is of course an abstraction, for such a thing never existed in Israel in so complete and universal a way…Religious thought cannot be separated out from these traditions and represented thus in abstract."[337]

If then the concept is an abstraction that would have been foreign to the ancients, how can a search be made in the Scripture to move beyond a general representation to a solid conviction that Adam and his heirs were monotheists? Looking for direct references to monotheism in the abstract will evade us.

We also note that in the ancient world, biblical monotheism is not found in cultic practice or prescribed ritual, although a few scattered references might suggest otherwise. Cain and Abel

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[334] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 153.

[335] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 221.

[336] Smith, *Origins*, 11.

[337] Von Rad, *OT Theology*, 1:112.

bring free-will offerings to Yahweh (Gen. 4:3-7); Noah builds an altar, offering burnt offerings to Yahweh, after leaving the ark (Gen. 8:20); and Abram built an altar upon entering Canaan at Shechem (Gen. 12:5-7), and again at Bethel (Gen. 12:8), and later at Hebron (Gen. 13:18). Although these appear to be cultic expressions, none of them are commanded by Yahweh, nor are any of them systematic in nature. They are offerings from the heart which come out of relationship.

Cassuto sees in the offerings brought to Yahweh by Cain and Abel merely religious duty, performed "ideally" by Abel whereas "Cain was content merely to discharge this duty."[338] When he comments on Noah's altar after disembarking from the ark, he suggests the offering is neither for atonement nor asking for future protection and blessing; instead, "when a person has been saved from a terrible danger, or has escaped from a general catastrophe, his first reaction is to give thanks to him who saved him or helped him to escape. And there could be no greater thanksgiving than these sacrifices."[339] Neither were Abraham's altars for cultic sacrifice but memorial monuments "which served as a token of the sanctification of the land to the service of the God of Abraham."[340]

Von Rad s[eci;ates that the biblical writer has no cultic interests in the narrative text about Cain and Abel,[341] nor in the altar that Noah builds, although the LORD's response in 8:21 shows it to be important to the Yahwist.[342] But von Rad suggests that the altars that Abram built in 12:7, 8;

[338] Cassuto, *Genesis*, 1:205.

[339] U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part Two: From Noah to Abraham*, trans. from Hebrew by Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992), 117 .

[340] Cassuto, *Genesis*,2:328-29.

[341] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 104.

[342] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 121.

13:18, were "erected within sight of the heathen cultic center" of his Canaanite neighbors, and would only make sense later in light of God's promise of this land as Israel's inheritance.[343]

Arnold thinks that with the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, the text "does not institute sacrifice as a religious observance but assumes it as a logical corollary between work and thanksgiving,"[344] and suggests, at least with Noah, Yahweh is the one who is anxious to experience fellowship and human devotion.[345] His one distinction, however, is that "the patriarchs never use existing cult sites, but rather build new altars or reuse ones they themselves built previously."[346]

Finally, Leupold believes that the offerings brought by Cain and Abel may not have been the first they offered Yahweh, and that there is no ground for the suggestion that "the incident is conceived as the initiation of sacrifice," but that the practice of sacrifice by mankind was initiated by Adam. Leupold further suggests that

> since no commandment is recorded authorizing or requesting sacrifice from man as a thing divinely sought, we are, no doubt, nearer the truth when we let sacrifices originate spontaneously on man's part as a natural expression of a devout spirit and of gratitude toward the omnipotent Giver of all good things. Sacrifice meets a deep need of the human heart.[347]

Leupold thinks that Abram felt compelled "to give personal public testimony to God's mercy" for having appeared to him, that is, testimony in the form of an altar. "The soul of the patriarchal religion was sacrifice."[348] But this public testimony would have cultural implications:

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[343] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 166.

[344] Arnold, *Genesis*, 78.

[345] Arnold, *Genesis*, 108.

[346] Arnold, *Genesis*, 134.

[347] Leupold, *Genesis*, 193.

[348] Leupold, *Genesis*, 420.

"This new permanent home [Hebron] is to be sanctified by an altar for sacrifices to Yahweh, and is to have in that altar a means of worship as well as a testimony to all men that Abram had nothing in common with the Canaanites and their idolatrous worship."[349]

No cultic expression or prescribed religious rite was in play in any of these sacrifices or altars; rather, they were a series of public witnesses to their faith—a faith that began with Adam, continued through the marked (and unmarked) lives of the primevals, was handed to Abram, who in turn preserved that line of witness through his heirs.

Since monotheism, therefore, cannot be found in cultic expression among the primevals and patriarchs, or extracted from abstract concepts, we are forced to look in some other direction. This study argues that biblical monotheism is to be found in relationship with Yahweh, in the intentional walking before Him. In fact, Smith's suggestion is helpful. For the ancient Israelites, it was not whether they would call themselves monotheists, instead "what mattered was the exclusive claim and relationship of the Israelite people and their deity."[350] But why must that exclusive claim and relationship be held at bey until Israel is established as a people or a nation?

From His first walk in the garden with Adam, Yahweh was forging a relationship that was intended to be exclusive in both allegiance and worship. Yahweh alone would be sovereign over His creation. But that relationship was also intended to be the generational inheritance of every human who would walk on the face of the earth.

As God forges that relationship with Adam, who, without parents or community, had no other point of reference for relationship, God is using this intentional walking to model what

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[349] Leupold, *Genesis*, 443.

[350] Smith, *Origins*, 11.

personal relationship looks like. But what is the standard that God Himself is using as a model? What is at the root of God's conception of personal relationship? This writer suggests that it was His own perichoretic relationship within the Godhead—what LaCugna draws from John of Damascus, "the mutual indwelling of the divine persons,"[351] and what Balswick, King, and Reimer cite from Gunton, "relatedness without absorption."[352]

As God remedies Adam's aloneness by creating "a helper fit for him" (Gen. 2:18, 20b), which Wenham translates as "a helper *matching* him,"[353] He is giving Adam an opportunity to experience his own *perichōresis*, which Balswick, King, and Reimer describe so perfectly:

> Such relationships are characterized by mutuality, give and take, and they enable the self to be known most fully in the process of knowing another. In such relationships there is space to simultaneously be oneself and to be in relationship with each other. There is room to encounter the other and to encounter the self through the other. The self is never lost in the face of the other. The other does not impinge on the self, but the other promotes the presence of the self.[354]

But what God is modeling for Adam from His own trinitarian *perichōresis*, and Adam is experiencing with Eve in this new marriage, the couple also, at the same time, are learning to apply to their intentional walk with God. This *perichōresis* is what God is modeling *for* Adam, but also what He is sharing *with* Adam.

When applied to the intimacy of human marriage, the ideal mutuality that Balswick, King, and Reimer describe is what every newlywed couple hopes to find in marriage—the give and take, being able to be fully known in the process of knowing another, being able to be oneself while

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[351] LaCugna, "Trinity," 55.

[352] Balswick, King, and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self*, 37.

[353] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 68; italics added.

[354] Balswick, King, and Reimer, *Reciprocating Self*, 41-42.

being in relationship, and never being lost in the face of the other. That is the pattern in the Trinity that God is teaching Adam for this marriage, and every marriage that is to follow. In fact, to some degree, that is what *all* relationships have the potential of experiencing.

But can that same *perichōresis* be shared between Adam and God? Can those same ideals happen between the divine and the human? In its trinitarian pattern, mutuality is a given. In the human realm, it is an ideal, albeit one that is within reach. But can mutuality—a true give and take, being able to be *me*, the *real me*, and never being lost in the face of the other—truly happen between the divine and the human? That is what we see between God and Abraham as he bargains for the salvation of Sodom and Gomorrah, starting at fifty righteous souls but moving the divine will to the point of agreeing to stay His hand of judgment if but *ten* righteous souls could be found (Gen. 18:22-33). We also see it between God and Moses, first as he interceded with Yahweh for the lives of his people, whom God was determined to destroy because of the golden calf at the foot of Sinai (Exod. 32:7-14); and again as Yahweh was sending them from Sinai to the Promised Land, determined to send an angel instead of His own presence, saying, "I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people" (Exod. 33:2-3), and Moses boldly pleads for God's personal presence on the journey, with Yahweh relenting, saying, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name" (Exod. 33:12-17).

This is the give and take of *perichōresis*, and the essence of healthy relationship. God is sovereign, and far from my equal. But He also enters into personal relationship with the human soul who seeks Him, and will make great accommodation for mutuality. This study will suggest that this relationship is also the essence of biblical monotheism. As Yahweh walked with Adam, He was not only teaching him that for which he otherwise had no point of reference, that is, how

to develop and sustain intimate human relationship, but He was offering to enter that same relationship *with* Adam, thereby suggesting that Adam would need no other sovereign. Yahweh Himself would be his only focus and center.

Seven generations later, we find another who perichoretically walks with God, and again in the tenth generation. That intentional walk would become the standard set for divine-human relationship, a standard which would be offered to Abraham and his heirs. In Genesis 48:15, it is that same intentional walk that Jacob points to when he declares of Yahweh, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked (התהלך, *hithallek*), the God who has been *my shepherd* all my life long to this day." For these primeval and patriarchal saints, Yahweh *alone* was sovereign, worthy of exclusive allegiance and worship—not in some cultic experience, but in everyday, intentional walking before Him.

It is in that same spirit that the apostle Paul writes, "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him… Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:17, 23-24). *That* is biblical monotheism, stretching all the way back to the garden of Eden.

Chapter Four – The Academy, the Church, and the Reader

I. Introduction: A Question of Application

As we turn the page to this final chapter, there is, in the mind of the writer, a question of application. The case has been made that Adam, from his first encounters with the Creator, developed a personal relationship with Yahweh which the biblical writer conveys in the Hebrew verb התהלך (*hithallek*, "to walk intentionally"). Throughout the OT, the Hebrew verb הלך (*halak*, to walk) occurs more than 1,500 times, but only sixty-four of those occurrences are in the Hithpael verbal stem, and each of these occurrences, it has been argued, show clear signs of intentionality in the action that is being taken. That intentionality in many cases is portrayed through relationship with Yahweh.

This writer has argued that this intentional walk would become the standard for the remainder of Adam's life, even outside the garden, would be the spiritual inheritance of the generations that followed him, and would become the foundation upon which Israel would build her life and faith. It might even be suggested that perhaps this was the set pattern for Israel to walk, to follow a pattern, that was training them to think monotheistically after their exposure to the pantheon of Egyptian gods, which God at the Exodus showed Israel are no gods at all. The modern term for this divine-human relationship, this intentional walk with Yahweh, is therefore identified as biblical monotheism.

But there remains the question of application. Some will question the argument itself, while others might accept the argument for what it is—merely an academic idea that has little impact on life in the 21st century. If this study is merely an academic pursuit to argue a technical point, then perhaps it is of little value beyond the conferring of a degree to the writer.

But the intent of the writing goes well beyond some technical point. Kaufmann has suggested that "biblical scholarship has entered a period of search for new foundations."[355] Walther Eichrodt, in his preface to the first edition of his OT theology, also suggested that there are those who are "looking for new lines along which to direct their thoughts."[356] It is hoped that the foregoing chapters will in some small way influence the new foundations that are laid in OT and biblical studies, and that the new lines of academic thought may at least consider what has been written. But the Academy is not alone in this search.

Nearly a quarter of a century after publishing his first edition, Eichrodt suggests that his fifth revised work would be of service "both in the sphere of academic study *and* in the practical ministry of the pastor and missionary, to the glory of God and the happiness of the reader."[357] Although the majority of pastors and missionaries have been trained in the Academy, and many have kept close ties to the academic world, their calling to ministry has been played out in Christian pulpits around the world, preaching and teaching what they were taught. Despite denominational civil wars and divisive congregational debates that rage today, there is a growing hunger in both pew and pulpit for a faith that can address the modern and postmodern mind while renewing its foundational ties.

In this chapter the hopes for the Academy, for the Church, and for the Reader will be clarified, and the call to intentional walking with Yahweh, the One and Only God, will be explained.

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[355] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 1.

[356] Eichrodt, *Theology of the OT*, 1:12.

[357] Eichrodt, *Theology of the OT*, 1:16; italics added.

II. The Academy

Academic pursuit can take on a life of its own, becoming an end rather than a means. In its truest sense, it is the unquenchable desire to explore the heights and depths and breadth of the world of knowledge in any discipline, whether the humanities, the sciences, or the life of faith. But it is also the place where that exploration takes place. As both a state of mind and a situated place, it takes the student and opens before her the unimagined possibilities. But when the Academy becomes its own center and goal, its ability to lead the student toward new horizons beyond its academic reach is hindered, and the pathway itself ceases to lead anywhere. Such an Academy produces little that will either educate or develop the student beyond the acquisition of basic facts, and facts alone are insufficient to form the depth and character of the student. This is especially true when the intended focus of the Academy is Christian faith.

If it has been shown that biblical monotheism is not only represented as the original religion of humanity, but the divine standard that was passed on to the saints in both the primeval and patriarchal ages, and the foundation of both Israelite religion and NT Christianity, and further shown that this biblical monotheism is best demonstrated in an intentional walk with Yahweh, then there will likely be some dust that is stirred up as we begin to walk in paths that perhaps have been neglected for far too long. Intentionality is not always gentle, and the dust that is stirred up sometimes settles in new places and new patterns.

But this writer is convinced that the call of God can still be heard. Modern and postmodern thought may have given us a large enough campground that we no longer miss the paths that lead beyond it. But is that campground an end in itself?

When we trace the wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel, it often appears to be aimless and unintentional walking, leading them nowhere. But is it not possible that God was doing

for them what He did for Adam in those garden walks? As He and Adam walked night after night, Adam received an education about how to be human, and how to be in relationship. Perhaps God was re-educating the children of Israel after a long encampment in enemy territory, teaching them to depend on Him alone for sustenance and direction.

As we consider the question of application for the Academy, this writer is praying for a renewed emphasis on intentionality in how we approach that which has been entrusted to us. There was a day when the voice of God beckoned us to begin this journey of faith as biblical scholars, but for some of us, those early paths have taken us to places that can no longer be supported by the mind and will of God. As the dust settles and we find ourselves in new surroundings, may we ask God to teach us as He taught Adam and the children of Israel, giving us renewed commitments that honor Him and His purpose for our scholarly pursuit.

A. Commitment to the Reliability of Scripture

Two significant monographs have been written to address the subject of the reliability of Scripture. Kenneth A. Kitchen researched and penned his 2003 magnum opus, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, suggesting that political correctness and postmodernism cannot be the sole determiners of whether truth exists, but there must be an examination of all the evidence.[358] More than a decade later, Craig L. Blomberg researched and penned a NT equivalent, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*, believing that, while the century or so leading up to the 1960s can be characterized with "a general trajectory of increasing skepticism," the tide has since turned: "the amount of solid scholarship that has been produced in the last forty-five years internationally that supports the

[358] K. A, Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003) xiv, 1-5.

historical trustworthiness of this or that portion of the Bible has grown exponentially."[359] Both works, each significant in content and volume, are valuable in the Academy's search for truth.

John Oswalt calls for even ground as the starting point in any discussion about the historicity of the biblical record. He is not advocating for blind faith that asks no questions and formulates simplistic answers, nor is he suggesting that there are not historical details and ways of thinking about historicity that need to be worked out. But the Bible's own claims about what it says and what it means must be taken seriously, and the bias against its accuracy and integrity cannot "be given a privileged place in the discussion."[360]

This study has posited an accepted position—that the Bible represents monotheism as the original religion of the human race[361]—but has approached the subject from a new angle, tracing the use of the Hithpael התהלך (*hithallek*) by the biblical writer as a description of intentional walking, intentional living before Yahweh, and that such an intentional walk is a clear sign of monotheistic faith.

In the world of biblical studies, this and other hard questions about the world of antiquity as revealed in the OT are being asked and answered. What this writer is calling for is an underlying agreement that, although we do not understand how it all fits together, the biblical record is unique in the ANE—indeed unique in any time period and in any cultural setting—as a record of God's dealings with humanity. As part of that unique quality, the Bible espouses certain things about itself that must be considered foundational in the field of biblical studies. Two scholars may come

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[359] Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament: Countering the Challenges to Evangelical Christian Beliefs* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016), xxi.

[360] Oswalt, *Bible among the Myths*, 15-18.

[361] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 153, 221; Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 68.

to a temporary impasse on the thesis of this paper, standing squarely on opposite sides of the matter. But there must be an agreement that, despite our limited capacity to understand all the issues, we can trust God and His Word, and we will have to move on for the moment to the hard work outlined below.

B. Commitment to the Hard Pursuit of Truth

In the realm of biblical scholarship, there is a constant pursuit of truth, but that truth is coming from many perspectives. In order to work in this arena of biblical scholarship with any possibility of coming together and moving forward, there must be a process of hard work that sometimes will yield answers only after hours—or perhaps years—of patience, research, and reflection. Seldom will answers quickly and easily unfold before our eyes; more often, persistence is required—sometimes working and waiting, digging and re-digging, until an answer begins to emerge.

In assessing Smith's work of denying early monotheism in light of scattered biblical references to an ANE pantheon of gods, Hess acknowledges that Smith "prefers to understand early biblical poems (Num. 23, 24; Deut. 32; Judg. 5; and Ps. 82) as indicating that Yahweh was a second-level deity subservient to El. Only later did Yahweh become identified with El and achieve first-level status in the pantheon."[362] This claim should send the Jewish and Christian scholar back to those very texts to make sense of those references in light of what the Bible as a whole reveals about who God is and how humanity has been engaged by Him from the beginning.

Addressing Smith's concerns, not in controversy but in a search for truth, requires that we have a solid understanding of what the *biblical text* is actually saying, and that understanding is only possible with hard work and constant prayer. The biblical scholar's commitment must be

[362] Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 77.

focused on nothing less. Some might object to the need for constant prayer, but Sarna would disagree. His thoughts suggest a number of challenges to the Academy, but ultimately that the biblical scholar

> has to recognize the presence of a dimension not accessible to the ordinary norms of investigation. Truth is not exclusively coincident with scientific truth. After all the massive and imposing achievements of scientism have had their say, there must yet remain that elusive, indefinable, essence which lies beyond the scope and ken of the scientific method, and which is meaningful only to the ear that is receptive and attuned. Spiritual insight and sensitivity are as indispensable a scholarly ingredient as a faultless methodology.[363]

Another example of this hard work can be found in our review of Kaufmann's organic framework (see chapter 2). Kaufmann determined that biblical monotheism could not have been original with either the primevals or the patriarchs, but he made that determination by setting identifiers that could only be applied to later Israel, identifiers which also would automatically exclude Israel's forebears as monotheists, and then declared the subject closed.[364] That approach is short sighted, and fails adequately to address the subject. Instead, if indeed the Bible represents the original religion of the human race as monotheism, there must be a commitment to this persistent hard work. The scholar must look further and deeper to uncover the basis on which these claims are made.

If both Kaufmann and Sarna are correct that the Bible represents monotheism as the original religion of mankind, but they struggle to show how that is possible, given what we already know of the ANE, the biblical scholar must be driven back to the text to continue the search for how that monotheism is portrayed or understood. The scholar might ask, *In what ways, then, might we find that monotheism played out?* If it is not found in the terminology of the Scriptures, that is,

[363] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, xxiv-xxv.

[364] Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, 222.

there are no declarations by Adam or Noah or Abraham saying, "I am a monotheist," then where is it found in the text? It cannot be simply a general sense of things. There must be *something* in the text that would lead us to that conclusion. The hard pursuit of truth includes thinking outside the norm, digging in places that might not easily yield results, and allowing truth to emerge in its time as God sees fit to reveal it. There is a warning, however, with that drive back to the text. God promises to lead us into all truth by His Spirit (John 16:13), but He does not suggest it will be easy, nor that it will be instantaneous. He seems not to be under the same pressure to clear up every point of contention that we want clarified.

C. Commitment to the Academic Process of Genuine Peer Review

If the Academy is to be truly renewed in its pursuit of truth and determined to intentionally walk in that pursuit, there must be a commitment to the academic process of genuine peer review. An Academy that is on the cutting edge of understanding revealed truth in the biblical record will constantly be asking questions that perhaps have never before been asked, and finding solutions that have until now evaded the Christian mind. Some of those ideas, in time, will be discarded as heresy, or at least as unworthy of the Word of God. But some of those ideas will take root in a new understanding of what God has been doing from the beginning. A great example of this process can be seen in each of the Church Councils, beginning with the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, where debate and peer review at its finest are able, under the Holy Spirit's counsel, to bring consensus.

But distinguishing which of those ideas will be set aside and which will be folded into what is known in biblical scholarship requires dialogue—both careful speaking and genuine listening. There have been occasions where a new idea has been set aside prematurely simply because it does

not fit into any accepted model of what is believed[365] and other occasions where the counsel of peer review has gone unheeded and an idea allowed to take on a life of its own.[366]

In the Academy, ideas are likely to clash. But the spirit of discovery, the pursuit of truth, must allow a full hearing, an honest assessment, and a godly response.

D. Commitment to the Service of the Church

In every generation since Jesus issued the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) and Paul charged young Timothy to a bold proclamation of the gospel (2 Tim. 4:1-8), the Church has lived out its mission, sometimes under fire, but always in the trenches. Defining how that mission is to be interpreted and the gospel proclaimed could not rest only in the hands of individual believers and congregations. They would play a part in the day to day living out of the gospel, but there must be a standard that could be applied across the wide horizon of the Church. It was with that intention that the Academy was called into being, and that men and women of faith set aside other kinds of ministry to concentrate on defining that standard, often in an academic setting.

But there have been times that the Academy has been in sharp conflict with the Church and, wishing to liberate itself from the Church's encumbered and dogmatic approach, has commandeered the Scriptures. In this way, the Academy has in many way become the sole possessor and primary interpreter of the Text—with little or no regard for the Church, her needs,

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[365] For instance, when Douglas Petrovich had prepared the manuscript for his monograph, *The World's Oldest Alphabet: Hebrew as the Language of the Proto-Consonantal Script*, he asked for peer review of the idea, but two prominent scholars in the field "both refused to review his findings prior to publication," although one of the two later suggested that Petrovich "seems irresponsible" to have published his book without "rigorous scholarly examination first." The correspondence can be traced in Colin D. DeVault, "Ancient Writing and the Hebrew Alphabetic Script" (ThD CT920A Final Paper, Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2020), 9-14.

[366] Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible*, 130-31.

or her perspectives from the trenches. Alister McGrath has suggested that in this way, "the Scripture has become exiled from its homeland."[367]

But in a renewed approach, the Academy must realize that it has a dual responsibility that serves both the Text and the Church to whom and for whom the Text was given. It cannot serve either the Text or the Church (or itself) while it sees itself as sole possessor and sole interpreter or as an end in itself. There is great need for academic research, much of which is not easily managed within the scope of the life of the Church. But an Academy that best serves the Text is one that does so, not in opposition to, but in service of, the Church.

III. The Church

If we are looking for an application of this study within the Academy, proposing a renewed, intentional walk by biblical scholars that includes a commitment to the service of the Church, then the next logical step is to look for an application within the Church itself. The demands that are placed upon the Church are heavy, and the resources available to her appear to be diminishing at record levels, including a shortage of pastors and church leaders to shepherd dwindling congregations. Against these odds and under such heavy weight, the Lord Jesus has promised to build His Church in such a way that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

But for the Church to live victoriously in the midst of the assaults that are intimated in that promise, she must steady her gait and determine, by God's help, to move intentionally forward, allowing every step to count for eternity. Modern and postmodern voices have spoken and continue to speak into the Church, suggesting what her mission must be in the 21st century. But the voice of Christ must be heard above every other, for in the end, the Church is *His* Body, and her mission

[367] McGrath, "Reclaiming," 69.

His concern. This writer would suggest that His call to the Church is a call to stand firm, in order that the purposes of Christ may be realized in our day.

A. Stand Firm as a People of the Book

It is easy to be critical of the Academy, especially in light of some of its more egregious assaults on the reliability and authority of Scripture. But the Academy could not have commandeered a Text that was living and breathing in the trenches of congregational and denominational life. Such an exile from its homeland was only possible because the Church in many respects had lost interest in the Text and was no longer in a living relationship with it.

When the reliability and authority of the Scripture has been conceded, there are segments of the Church that are immediately relieved that the restrictive standard has been removed. If, as some suggest, the OT itself was a late development of exilic or post-exilic Israel in response to its neighboring cultures in the ANE, and its connection to the patriarchs, its foundational bearing in the Exodus, Sinai, the wilderness wanderings, the conquest of Canaan, and the united monarchy, are all set aside as historical fiction, then the biblical claims to authority are easily dismissed, and the standard is gone! Many today would be relieved at the removal of this divine standard. But when the solid ground that the foundational bearings provided are removed, the Church begins to flounder.

This will be most impacted by the young (or not so young) pastor coming to the trenches from the Academy. Has she learned to center her life and ministry, her teaching and preaching, in the standard that is set within the Scripture? Is her calling grounded in that Word of God? If so, then the word that her people receive week after week will bring life, and will help them lean upon that word as the foundational bearing of their Christian life and witness.

Whatever renewal comes to the Academy as a fresh approach to the Scripture, that same renewal will be transferred to the Church that receives the pastor formed in that Academy. As Barth reminds us, "preachers are summoned to a life history with the Bible in which something constantly takes place between them and God's Word."[368] When the preacher is convinced of the reliability and authority of the Bible in his or her own life, and the preaching bears witness to that conviction, the Church will take hold of that word from God and allow it to bear rich fruit.

In writing the preface to *The New Testament Commentary: Salvation Army Edition*, General William Booth has captured what this writer suggests for the Church as a primary foundational bearing:

> It may be as well to say here that while we hold that God does by His Spirit speak as directly to His people in this age as in any other, still The Salvation Army solemnly and emphatically regards the Bible as the divinely authorised standard by which all professed revelations are to be tried, and if any professed revelations speak and square not according to that standard, such revelations are to be rejected as having no truth in them.
>
> The Bible, or at least a portion of it, should be in every Officer's and Soldier's pocket, so that he can read and think upon its messages at odd intervals. Not a day should pass without its being read. It is the one book in the world which never grows stale. Those who read it most love it best. God has put His heart on paper. Read by the light of the Holy Ghost, the Bible is indeed "a light unto our feet."
>
> The Bible is intended to be its own interpreter, and, like the religion which it proclaims, is ordinarily easily understood by the plainest and most unlettered of men. Nevertheless, the assistance of good and learned men is not without advantage, and this Commentary can be recommended as giving that assistance.
>
> Christians for generations have been spending an enormous amount of strength upon the Bible. They have done well in that duty, but it seems to me that with regard to the sacred Book something very important still remains to be done. Christian scholars have translated it, re-translated it, and then translated it again. They have commented, and printed, and published it in every form, and it is hurrying on to encompass the world with its revelations in every tongue. They have explained and preached about almost every word within its covers. There seems to me only one

[368] Barth, *Homiletics,* 78.

> thing left to be done with it, and that is to give us a literal and faithful and understandable translation of it IN PRACTICE.
>
> Let us live it, live the real thing, live the Christ life. Let us live out before men, lives on which God has written in big heavenly letters His own notions of truth, righteousness, purity, patience, and of love and sacrifice.[369]

It is when the Bible takes that place in the life of the Church that the following two insights are made possible.

B. Stand Firm as a Prophetic Voice into 21st Century Thought

When the Church recovers her full dependence upon, and her living within, the text of Scripture as her foundational bearing, she will increase her voice into 21st century thought and discussion. McGrath reminds the Church to live "in the firm knowledge that we have something to say which the world needs to hear, and are not simply echoing its own voice."[370]

As we hold up the literature of ancient Israel against that of their neighbors in the ANE, we find that she was fully aware of the conversations happening around her, and engaged in those cultural conversations. In his monograph, *Against the Gods*, John Currid makes a strong case for the use of polemical theology by the biblical authors as they contrast their monotheistic worldview against that of their neighbors throughout the ANE. Currid acknowledges that in the field of comparative studies, there are extremes of scholarly opinions, ranging from little influence between the two, to seeing the OT as merely "another expression" of ANE mythological literature. Currid finds the truth "somewhere between the two extremes,"

> It is certainly undeniable that the historical, geographical, and cultural context of the Bible is the ancient Near East, and study of the era has much to add to our

[369] William Booth, "Preface," *The New Testament Commentary: Salvation Army Edition* (London: Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, Ltd., no date).

[370] McGrath, "Reclaiming," 87.

> understanding of the Old Testament. But it is also true that the Old Testament worldview is unique in the ancient Near East, and this is immediately confirmed by its all-pervasive monotheism.[371]

Currid further remarks that polemical theology—that is, the biblical use of ANE expressions and motifs, each filled "with radically new meaning," which are then applied to Yahweh's person and work—"rejects any encroachment of false gods into orthodox belief; there is an absolute intolerance of polytheism. Polemical theology is monotheistic to the very core."[372]

In a world that is ready to discard the authority of Scripture because that authority is too restrictive in its assessment of current thoughts, the idea of the Scripture's unreliability is welcome news for some. If primeval monotheism is replaced by a longstanding polytheistic worldview—one that Oswalt calls Continuity Thinking[373]—then our own culture's downward spiral is almost justified, and the need to repent put off again.

The apostle Paul reminded Timothy that "the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions" (2 Tim. 4:3). Peter recommends that our Christian defense should be "with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet. 3:15), although he is not recommending *no* voice or *no* reply. If we can reestablish those first relational bearings that were made available in the garden as Yahweh walked with Adam, then perhaps we can once more begin to speak both gently and boldly—perhaps more accurately, *genuinely* and boldly—into our cultural conversation as the people *of* God with a word *from* God.

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[371] Currid, *Against the God*, 9.

[372] Currid, *Against the Gods*, 25.

[373] Oswalt, *Bible among the Myths*, 47-62.

C. Stand Firm as an Ambassadorial Presence in 21st Century Life

Further, as we look to Israel, her engagement with culture was not merely in the realm of cultural *conversation*, but the very essence of *living* in community. However, this is where Israel takes a different stand. Oswalt acknowledges that "Israel was a fully participating part of its world," but suggests that the points of contact are minimal.[374] In another monograph, Oswalt reminds us that the purpose of the gospel, which has not changed since Genesis 4, is "the transformation of human behavior in this world," and that without that transformation, "the whole purpose of the Church's existence becomes blurred and confused."[375]

Israel is often criticized for her exclusionary outlook, seeing herself as distinct from her ANE neighbors.[376] She lived in the larger community, rightly saw herself as ancient Near Eastern, but knew that Yahweh had called her to be separate. That call at the foot of Sinai helped her see the bigger picture of holiness. She was to be separate so that her cultural integration would be as an ambassador, not as a careless participant. Yahweh made it clear to Moses what he was to say:

> You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, *you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples*, for all the earth is mine; and *you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." (Exod. 19:4-6)

This is somewhat akin to what God was saying to Abram in Genesis 17. John Durham sees in this text language that was easily memorized so that it could be repeated often.[377] But he goes

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[374] Oswalt, *Bible among the Myths*, 106.

[375] Oswalt, *Called to Be Holy*, 3.

[376] Smith, *Origins*, 14.

[377] John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC 3 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 261.

on to suggest that to be *a kingdom of priests* was to extend Yahweh's presence "throughout the world," and that to be *a holy nation* was a call "to be a people set apart, different from all other people by what they are and are becoming."[378] Yahweh's intention for this distinction, however, was never intended to be exclusionary, but to be an invitation. Durham calls them "a display-people, a showcase to the world of how being in covenant with Yahweh changes a people."[379]

This study has suggested that this difference will be seen in Israel's intentional walking before Yahweh, a walking that would have an impact on every arena of life. In Leviticus 11:45, God's call to be separate was based on His own character: "You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy," which Oswalt suggests "is not a demand, but a wonderful offer."[380] The importance of this wonderful offer is recognized and endorsed by Peter for all Christians, as followers of Jesus Christ, when he writes, "Just as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

It is too easy, for both Israel and her forebears and for the Church in the 21st century, to simply blend into the culture. Blending in demands nothing of us except observation and imitation, and does not demand repentance on the part of culture. It appears that everyone wins. But in the economy of the Kingdom of God, everyone loses. God's people lose their distinction and their likeness to God Himself, and the world loses a vital witness to another possibility, one that involves its very salvation.

[378] Durham, *Exodus*, 263.

[379] Durham, *Exodus*, 263.

[380] Oswalt, *Called to Be Holy,* 199.

IV. The Reader

As we come to the end of this study, and more particularly, to the end of this chapter where we have asked the question of application, it comes down to the reader's response. It would be easy for the required application to be seen as the responsibility of only the Academy and the Church. But what of the individual? Is there no expectation that *our* walking must also take on a new intentionality? Because this is an academic paper, it is assumed that some readers will be scholars or scholars-in-the-making. But it has also been written with the lay reader in mind, which means some of the readers will be people in the pew. At this point in application, both are in view.

The case has been argued that Adam was a biblical monotheist, in direct relationship with Yahweh from the very start, and that in the course of time he introduced that spiritual walk to those who followed him. Although only a few individuals are named as having *walked with* or *walked before* Yahweh, the Bible demonstrates a clear line that reaches all the way to Abraham, and continues through the patriarchal age to the Hebrews in captivity, and to early Israel.

Of the sixty-four appearances of התהלך (*hithallek*, "to walk intentionally"), eight are found in Genesis. Each of these occurrences speak of an individual walk with or before Yahweh, with the exception of the first in 3:8, where Yahweh *Himself* is walking in the garden. Even the final reference in 48:15, although it mentions two individuals (Abraham and Isaac), the reference is to *each* of them walking individually with Yahweh.

Therefore, when we consider the question of application, it must include an individual application to the life of the reader, who is asked (along with Abraham) to "walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you" (Gen. 17:1). The following are key areas that, if pursued in the context of divine relationship, will require intentionality.

A. Be Intentional in Devotional Pursuit

For some readers the Bible is a textbook in theological or biblical studies, and for others it is a tool in the daily work of pastoral ministry, seminary or Bible college teaching, or some other area of biblical research and writing. For that reader who is regularly in the Word, there is a danger that the Bible becomes little more than a text or a tool, and reading the Bible is seldom personal. Instead of coming to the Word as "the place where we can expect to hear the voice of God,"[381] it becomes the place where my next sermon, my next classroom lecture, or my next journal article will come from.

One of the tests as to where the reader will truly find herself in this regard is simply to ask where she turns when trouble comes, or when some major (or minor) decision must be made. The spiritual counsel to our parishioners or our students is to turn to God and His Word, and that counsel is appropriate. But how can I turn to a word that has become merely a text or a tool?

The first application for the reader, no matter who the reader is in terms of scholarship or profession, is to find both an hour and a quiet place to daily open the Bible and seek God. Adam did not have a text, nor did Enoch, Noah, or Abraham—at least not a text in the sense of that which we have at our disposal. But for us, to intentionally walk (התהלך, *hithallek*) before God begins in the text with personal engagement with God.

[381] Barth, *Homiletics*, 78.

B. Be Intentional in Congregational Pursuit

The apostle Paul described the Church as the Body of Christ.[382] However others saw the Church or described it, Paul is the only one to use this image, this metaphor.[383] He applied this image to both the larger entity of the universal, catholic Church, and to the local body of believers. As a member of the Body of Christ, every Christian belongs to both. Belonging to the larger entity is far easier, however, since engagement is generally left to denominational leaders. But how we become engaged with a local body of believers, a congregation, will require intentionality.

The apostle Paul suggests that there are two dangers for the Body of Christ, each of which can keep the reader disengaged. The first is for the believer to see himself as unimportant in the life of the Body. In 1 Corinthians 12:14-20, Paul hears a believer suggesting that "because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body" (v. 15), or "because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body" (v. 16). Perhaps some readers have neglected to be engaged in congregational life because they have viewed their own spiritual gifting as not fitting in with the rest; what they possess is somehow square gifts needing to fit into round vacancies, and they cannot see how engagement *here* works *for me*. The other danger is in seeing the *other* as unimportant based on God's gifting to me. In 1 Corinthians 12:21-26, Paul hears a believer suggesting that "I have no need of you…" (v. 21). In both cases, it is often easier simply to arrive at church just in time for the Call to Worship, and to leave immediately following the Benediction. But that is hardly engagement.

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[382] See Rom. 7:4; 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 12:12-27; Eph. 3:6; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 30; Col. 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15.

[383] Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 173.

Miroslav Volf suggests that Schleiermacher's distinction—that Protestants find their relationship to the Church through their relationship to Christ, and that Catholics find their relationship to Christ through their relationship to the Church—is too simplistic, since both possibilities play a role in the life of the believer and the life of the Church.[384] Volf contends that, on the basis of constraints of Matthew 18:20, where Christ's presence is promised to the believer only in community, that "no one can come to faith alone and no one can live in faith alone."[385]

Intentionality in the Christian life requires engagement in the Body of Christ—meaningful engagement, engagement that forms and nurtures both me and the other. In his book, *Covenant, Community, and the Spirit*, Robert Sherman portrays the believer as a pilgrim,

> We are a people who yearn. We yearn for love; we yearn for beauty; we yearn for purpose and meaning. We long for happiness. In the midst of deprivation, we hunger for sustenance. In the midst of plenty, we thirst for something greater. Our desire, it appears, is insatiable; our hearts are always restless. Even when we have all that we might dream of, we long for some greater fulfillment that ever and again eludes us, like a feather that stirs past our hand just as we try to grasp it.[386]

Sherman goes on to talk about the Church as a blessing *and* as an instrument of blessing, and asks, "Is the Church therefore a means to an end, or an end in itself?" He believes that it is both and that "God would have us immerse ourselves in this community."[387] But is that immersion for the reader's own needs or for ministry to others in their needs? Again, it is for both. In body language, the hand is helped in its grasping of the door knob by the gift of sight in the eye (the

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[384] Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 159.

[385] Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 162.

[386] Robert Sherman, *Covenant, Community, and the Spirit: A Trinitarian Theology of Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 212.

[387] Sherman, *Covenant*, 214-15.

hand is the one who is helped), and the foot is enabled to move through the doorway by the agency of the hand (the hand is the one who helps).

The apostle Paul concludes with this assessment: "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor. 12:27), which Anthony Thiselton indicates "fittingly combines singular and plural" in its syntax,[388] that is, the larger body of believers and the individual member. The individual engagement, then, becomes a significant part of the whole.

Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer maintain that "whatever gift each one of them receives is not to be hidden away, or selfishly enjoyed, or exhibited for show, but to be used for the good of the whole community."[389] But deciding what that engagement will look like in each particular case, and working through the dangers of engagement within the body of others, will require intentionality. The saints in both the primeval and the patriarchal ages were living without the constraints of congregational life. But they also did not have the support of others in their intentional walk of faith.

C. Be Intentional in Academic Pursuit

Intentionality in one's *walk with* or *walk before* God must always begin in the personal, where two individuals—in this case, Yahweh and the believer—walk in counsel and communion. And since we were created as relational beings in the *Imago Dei*, that walk will necessarily branch out into engagement in the Body of Christ, in giving and receiving the grace of God at the hands of the other. But where and how does academic pursuit enter the discussion?

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[388] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1012.

[389] Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC (New York: T&T Clark, 1911), 278.

To the reader who is a scholar, already engaged in academic studies or academic work, the intentionality of that study has already become painfully obvious to us. The time, the energy, the engagement with new ideas that are shaped by orthodoxy, and orthodoxy that is renewed and refreshed—none of these comes easily, even for the scholar. Each will require an intentional step toward discipline and humble dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

But not every Christian is a natural student, and for some the idea of academic pursuit may seem out of the question. Yet the apostle Paul admonishes young Timothy, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). The KJV reads, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God," which William Barclay renders, "Put out every effort to present yourself to God as one who has stood the test."[390]

How that admonition gets applied to each believer depends on his or her life goals, and God's specific calling to ministry. For some already in academic circles it might require an additional biblical language or two. For some it will require learning new evangelistic tools or preaching methods. For some, simply how to begin to study the Bible systematically and in a more disciplined way. For the layman, perhaps it means setting aside the Study Bible with its ready-made answers on every verse, and allow your mind to engage the text for itself under the counsel of the Holy Spirit. You might be surprised how the Holy Spirit is able and willing to open up the Scriptures to you in a new way.

[390] William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, 2nd ed., NDSB (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1960), 198.

Considering your own capacity and where you are in the midst of your calling, this application is to be intentional about what you tackle next in your preparation for new or ongoing ministry. In some way, however, every Christian ought to be pursuing the life of academic study.

V. Final Prayer

O Yahweh, the One who was and is and is to come, eternal and sovereign in every age and every realm, hear our prayer, as Moses Your servant prayed:

> Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God…
>
> Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands! (Ps. 90:1-2, 16-17)

Lord, "teach us to number our days" (Ps. 90:12) that we may learn to walk intentionally before You in every arena of our lives.

We ask this in the name of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—Yahweh Elohim! Amen.

Appendix 1—The Use of הלך (*halak*, "to walk") in Character Transfer Among the Kings of Israel

Notes for Appendix 1:

1. The asterisk(s) behind a text in columns 2 and 3 indicate the reference(s) cited in column 4.
2. The unpointed text from BH has been supplied following the word that represents it in the ESV translation in column 4.
3. While there are accounts of the reign of many of these kings of Israel in 1 & 2 Chr., such accounts do not indicate the successor's character in relation to his predecessor.

Name	1 & 2 Kings	1 & 2 Chron.	Text
Jeroboam	1 Kgs. 12:25-33	2 Chr. 11:13-17	Jeroboam sets the standard for disobedience, including golden calves to worship, setting up high places instead of the temple in Jerusalem, establishing a non-Levitical priesthood, and establishing his own feast days.
Nadab	1 Kgs. 15:26*		"He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and *walked* (וילך) in the way of his father, and in his sin which he made Israel to sin."
Baasha	1 Kgs. 15:34*		"He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and *walked* (וילך) in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin which he made Israel to sin." NOTE: 1 Kgs 15:29-30
Elah	Nothing is written about the character of the transfer from Baasha to Elah.		
Zimri	1 Kgs. 16:18-19*		"And when Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house over him with fire and died, because of his sins that he committed, doing evil in the sight of the LORD, *walking* (ללכת) in the way of Jeroboam, and for his sin which he committed, making Israel to sin."
Omri	1 Kgs. 16:25-26*		"Omri did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did more evil than all who were before him. For he *walked* (וילך) in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in the sins that he made Israel to sin, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols."
Ahab	1 Kgs. 16:30-31*		"And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. And as if it had been a light thing for him *to walk* (לכתו) in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him."
Ahaziah	1 Kgs. 22:52*		"He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD

			and *walked* (וילך) in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. He served Baal and worshiped him and provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger in every way that his father had done."
Johoram (Joram)	2 Kgs. 8:18*		"And he *walked* (וילך) in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife. And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD."
Jehu	2 Kgs. 10:31*		"But Jehu was not careful *to walk* (ללכת) in the law of the LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam, which he made Israel to sin."
Johoahaz	2 Kgs. 13:2, 5-6*		"He did what was evil in the sight the LORD, and *followed* (וילך) the sins of Jeroboam and son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin; he did not depart from them… (Therefore, the LORD gave Israel a savior, so that they escaped from the hand of the Syrians, and the people of Israel lived in their homes as formerly. Nevertheless, they did not depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, which he made Israel to sin, but *walked* (הלך) in them; and the Asherah also remained in Samaria.)
Jehoash (Joash)	2 Kgs. 13:11*		"He also did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin, but he *walked* (הלך) in them."
Jeroboam II	2 Kgs. 14:24*		"And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin."
Zechariah	2 Kgs. 15:9*		"And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done. He did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin."
Shallum	Nothing is written about the character of the transfer from Zechariah to Shallum.		
Menahem	2 Kgs. 15:18*		"And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not depart all his days from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin."
Pekahiah	2 Kgs. 15:24*		"And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin."

Pekah	2 Kgs. 15:28*		"And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin."
Hoshea	2 Kgs. 17:2*		"And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, yet not as the kings of Israel who were before him."

Appendix 2—The Use of הלך (*halak*, "to walk") in Character Transfer Among the Kings of Judah

Notes for Table 2:

1. The asterisk(s) behind a text in columns 2 and 3 indicate the reference that is cited in column 4.
2. The unpointed text from BH has been supplied following the word that represents it in the ESV translation in column 4.

Name	1 & 2 Kings	1 & 2 Chron	Text
Rehoboam	1 Kgs. 12:14*	2 Chr. 12:14**	Setting the standard: * "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions." ** "And he did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the LORD."
Abijam (Abijah)	1 Kgs. 15:3*		"And he *walked* (וילך) in all the sins that his father did before him."
Asa	1 Kgs. 15:11*	2 Chr. 14:2	"And Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as David his father had done." NOTE: David had already set the standard!
Johoshaphat	1 Kgs. 22:43*	2 Chr. 17:3-4**	* "He *walked* (וילך) in all the way of Asa his father." ** "The LORD was with Johoshaphat, because he *walked* (הלך) in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals, but sought the God of his father and *walked* (הלך) in his commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel."
Jehoram	2 Kgs. 8:18*	2 Chr. 21:6**	"And he *walked* (וילך) in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done…"
Ahaziah	2 Kgs. 8:27*	2 Chr. 22:3-4	"He also *walked* (וילך) in the way of the house of Ahab and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD."
Athaliah	Nothing is written about the character of the transfer from Ahaziah to Athaliah.		
Joash (Jehoash)	2 Kgs. 12:2*	2 Chr. 24:2	"And Jehoash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all his days, because Jehoida the priest instructed him."
Amaziah	2 Kgs. 14:3*	2 Chr. 25:2**	* "And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, yet not like David his father. He did in all things as Joash his father had done." ** "And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, yet not with a whole heart."
Azariah (Uzziah)	2 Kgs. 15:3*	2 Chr. 26:4	"And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that his father had done."
Jotham	2 Kgs. 15:34*	2 Chr. 27:2	"And he did what was right in the eyes of the

			LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah had done."
Ahaz	2 Kgs. 16:3*	2 Chr. 28:2-3**	* "But he *walked* (וילך) in the way of the kings of Israel. He even burned his son as an offering, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel." ** "But he *walked* (וילך) in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even made metal images for the Baals, and he made offerings in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom and burned his sons as an offering, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel."
Hezekiah	2 Kgs. 18:3*	2 Chr. 29:2	"And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done."
Manasseh	2 Kgs. 21:2*	2 Chr. 33:2	"And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel."
Amon	2 Kgs. 21:20-22*	2 Chr. 33:22-23	"And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as Manasseh his father had done. He *walked* (וילך) in all the way in which his father *walked* (הלך) and served the idols that his father served and worshiped them. He abandoned the LORD, the God of his fathers, and *did not walk* (ולא הלך) in the way of the LORD."
Josiah	2 Kgs. 22:2*	2 Chr. 34:2	"And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and *walked* (וילך) in all the way of David his father."
Jehoahaz	2 Kgs. 23:32*		"And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done."
Johoikim (Eliakim)	2 Kgs. 23:37*	2 Chr. 36:5b	"And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done."
Johoichin	2 Kgs. 24:9*	2 Chr. 36:8b	"And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done."
Zedekiah	2 Kgs. 24:19-20*	2 Chr. 36:12-16	"And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. For because of the anger of the LORD it came to the point in Jerusalem and Judah that he cast them out from his presence."

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